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Theatre Makers' Experience with Crowdfunding: An Exploratory Study

By
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Arts Council of England
CC	Cultural Capital
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sports
FFF	Family-Friends-Fans Network
EC	Economic Capital
ETC	Established Theatre Companies
GTC	Graduate Theatre Companies
IA	Individual Artists
NESTA	National Endowment of Science, Technology and the Arts
NPO	National Portfolio Organizations
SC	Social Capital
SymC	Symbolic Capital

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploration into theatre makers' experience with crowdfunding amidst receding funding provision to the arts in the UK, post-2008 austerity. It focusses on the relationship between theatre makers and their backers, and looks at the consequences of collective financial support on their practice and theatrical productions.

Three largest groups of users on the platform *crowdfunder.co.uk* have been interviewed to investigate aspects of their practice that encourage giving from their backers. Framed by the principles of giving/gifting, their relationships are mapped against the structural dimensions of social capital, in particular, their levels of social capital to reveal an underlying reciprocity of mutual benefit and the public good status of theatre. It also draws on the convertibility of capitals from the financial, social and symbolic capital of theatre makers in their bid to draw in institutional funding for a more sustainable existence.

While donations from social relations through crowdfunding may have filled the gap in arts funding provision, it has also simultaneously given rise to a more diverse range of theatre productions, not necessarily framed by the policy-driven agenda of institutional funders. Hence, by participating in online giving, backers 'democratically' vary the theatre funding ecology by lending visibility to wider cohorts of theatre makers and their theatrical offering.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Theatre makers have always had to rely upon mixed funding resources to finance their productions, one of which is individual private giving through donations (Heterington, 2015; Varbanova, 2013; Cowen, 2009; Selwood, 2001). Although individual donations to small non-profit theatre companies tend to be modest and rarely supersede sources from privately earned income, commissions, or grants, the ability to leverage on all forms of funding is key for companies hoping to continue making theatre during financially testing times (DCMS, 2016; Baeck et.al., 2013, 2017). Given that productions of small, non-profit theatre companies in the United Kingdom have relied partially on subsidies from public and private funding institutions, the advent and pervasiveness of austerity at the start of the decade have called on their capacity to obtain alternative sources including individual private giving through crowdfunding (Harvie, 2015; Ravenhill, 2013).

With the revival of crowdfunding on the digital platform, evidence of intense recourse to collective funders for project financing across various ventures (Mach et. al., 2014; Duygan-Bump et.al., 2011; Block and Sandner, 2009) suggests that theatre companies could similarly attract potential backers in meeting the financial gaps of their proposed projects (DCMS, 2016; Baeck et.al., 2013, 2017). Periods of reduced public funding in the UK which intensified after state devolution of support to local government following the 2008/2009 financial crash (Rosenberg, 2020; Harvey, 2016; Selwood, 2010), have together threatened the provision to the arts, leaving artists to increasingly turn to crowdfunding as means of raising funds

for their projects¹. This is particularly evident among those experiencing structural barriers to institutional funding as with companies at their early stages in other sectors (Preece, 2015; Hemer et. al., 2011).

Findings from this study show that because of its accessibility, and ease of use, crowdfunding has also been employed by theatre makers whose funding applications to Arts Council England (ACE) have been rejected despite financially qualifying for its pre-requisites, or offered conditional subsidy upon their ability to match a funding target, as well as projects requiring additional provision after securing the original funding allocation. With the push for cultural philanthropy in 2010 and 2011 for corporate and individual giving respectively (Jeremy Hunt MP, 2010), the role of the state as patron and steward of the arts in the UK has been questioned for its diffusion of responsibilities to the sector, in particular, the persuasion for members of the public to give small donations through crowdfunding (Fischer, et. al. 2011 in Kuppuswamy and Bayus, 2017; Harvey, 2016; Harvie, 2015). This seemingly general invitation to cultural giving, nevertheless, has neglected to consider the capacity for arts organizations at different stages of their life cycle to command philanthropic support, and the tendency for those less able to draw in extensive support beyond the financial dependency of their networks of social relations. While the argument of the state absolving its duty through the shifting of funding responsibility to members of the public² has remained relevant, the pursuit of funding by theatre makers through crowdfunding over the years has resulted in unintended consequences across the larger theatre landscape.

¹ Since its lauched in 2009, *Kickstarter* accumulated £1billion funds globally. Following the uptrend in the US, Britons raised £56m through *Kickstarter* by 2014, and estimated to raise £4.4 billion in 2015 (Understanding Alternative Finance Report 2014)

² better known in the context of this research as 'the crowd'

About The Thesis

This thesis delves into the British theatre makers' experience with crowdfunding, through the exploration into the ways and reasons they opt for this approach, culminating in its effect on their practice, and the greater theatre ecology. It examines the composition of backers who have helped fund theatre projects, and the manner in which, cumulatively, their act of giving changes the theatre landscape. Taking into consideration the context of austerity as pursued by the government of the day, which oversaw funding cuts and devolution of the state, this thesis is interested in the effects that micro-philanthropic support for theatre project campaigns can have on the wider field of non-profit theatre companies.

Framed by the principles of gifting/giving, which problematize the micropolitics underlying the 'funder/patron – artist/recipient' relationships around the notions of patronage, philanthropy, reciprocity and social solidarity, the research identifies graduate theatre companies, individual artists and established theatre companies as the three largest groups of fundraisers of the crowdfunding platform, *crowdfunder.co.uk*³. As their distinction represents the nascent and established theatre makers, and between solo and group funding initiatives, they provide the opportunity to interrogate and follow through the interrelationship between existing funding channels and crowdfunding with greater distinctiveness than if genre, or location were foregrounded. Using social capital theory, the research investigates the patterns of online backing from families, friends, communities and institutions to theatre projects. Additionally, by drawing on their horizontal-vertical network structures, and structural dimensions of bonding, bridging and linking social capital, it undertakes to inform the exchanges initiated in the ecosystem of cultural

³ Data from the platform *crowdfunder.co.uk* between September 2011 and April 2018 shows that 182 were projects by Established Theatre Companies, 167 projects were by Graduate Theatre Companies, and 19 projects were by individual theatre makers.

giving by examining the mobilization of financial resources in the financing of theatre projects by the crowds of donors.

This research is a response to the under-reported plight of small-scale theatre companies in facing funding cuts as opposed to the predominant attention given to National Portfolio Organizations (Harvie, 2015; Upchurch, 2014). It is an opportunity to document the experiential aspect of crowdfunding as seen from the perspectives of theatre makers and crowdfunders amidst the platform economy. In addition, this work both complements and builds upon previous studies on the crowdfunding of theatre projects that have focussed primarily outside the UK (in the United States, this was addressed in Boeuf et.al, 2014), by offering an insight into the UK scenario besides responding to the concerns of imbalance resulting in the tendency for crowdfunding to amass populist productions whilst placing riskier avant-garde artistic productions at a disadvantage (Upchurch, 2014; Martin, 2010; Tusa, 2000) brought on by the imposition of austerity upon theatre companies requiring them to prioritize their survival, sustainability, and longevity. Finally, with a specific focus on theatre as a characteristically transient, intangible and experiential cultural offering, the research gathers accounts of cultural giving via crowdfunding as experienced by small and micro cultural enterprises.

The thesis asks these overarching research questions: *What effect does crowdfunding have on the theatre-funding ecosystem? What repercussions does it have on the wider theatre landscape?*

Arising from these two central questions are the following subsidiary enquiries:

SQ1: *Why and how do theatre makers use crowdfunding? What implications does it have for their practice?*

SQ2: *What constitutes the crowd, and why does the crowd back theatre projects?*

SQ3: *How does being funded by the crowd alter the theatre landscape?*

1.1 Research Background

The following section provides the research background to arts funding in the UK, then considers the funding of theatre projects since the arrival of crowdfunding on digital platforms a decade ago, while highlighting the key debates that have arisen since.

1.1.1 Funding of the Arts and Austerity

Due to its dependency on government budgetary allocation, the arts sector has been adversely affected by periods of austerity. Historically in the UK, periods of austerity have “dictated extremely modest budgets” for the arts, as seen immediately in the interweaving post-war years with periods of more generous provisions in between (Knell and Taylor, 2011; Harris, 1969: 255). This is recently repeated in the years following the 2008/2009 global recession as part of the government’s stringent measures to reduce public expenditure⁴. Where austerity had taken effect, the shortage of funding from the Treasury meant reduced allocation to the sector, and consequently, the increased dependency of arts organizations on council subsidy (Harvey, 2016; Harris, 1969). With their respective local agendas, funding priorities of local governments onto more immediate concerns have left arts organizations with limited support, hence,

⁴ Nevertheless, outside of austerity, it was long observed that, “the amount of money given to the arts is totally inadequate by any standard” (Goodman, 1972:259); with its “very modest budget” of governmental patronage incapable of providing adequately (Elderfield, 1972:174).

thrusting them further behind the queue of priority areas as fiscal prudence came into force⁵⁶ (Harvey, 2016; Newsinger, 2015; Glinkowski, 2012).

The period, in fact, is seeing a resurfacing of policies consistent with “rolling back the frontiers of the state” which had reinforced the cautionary emphasis for arts organizations “to seek alternative sources of funds” as the government became increasingly contingent upon the private sector to overcome shortfalls and immediate provision for the arts (Alexander, 2010)⁷. Under the climate of fiscal austerity, the sector has been facing the residue of former Thatcherite government policy which had earlier altered the relationship between the state and the arts by heralding the notion of enterprise culture in combating the said “culture of dependency”, and discouraging the “nanny state mentality”⁸. With the culminating effort of persuading corporate philanthropy to be more involved in the cultural arena (Upchurch, 2014:188), while placing further pressure on artists to seek plural funding sources (Peacock, 2000; Beck, 1989), the push for arts organizations to adopt mixed funding since the start of the decade is reiterating a similar pressure as in the 1980s (Hetherington, 2015). Thus, whereas Europe had since pushed for state support, incentivized artists, and subsidized the arts, Britain had adopted a cultural-darwinist stance by leaving the arts much to its own devices for survival

⁵ “At a time of austerity, it can feel extravagant to put money into museums, *theatres* and libraries which would otherwise be funding care homes and foster care places.” (Simon Parker, Director of NLGN quoted in Harvey, 2016)

⁶ “Councils have tried to protect spending on key services such as social care and this has meant that other services, such as housing and *culture* have seen larger reductions.” (Harvey, 2016:7)

⁷ Over the decades, the funding of the arts has been shaped by the political ideology held by the government of the day (Hadley and Gray, 2017; Noonan, 2007; Lewis and Rushton, 2007), as a representational aspect of its distributive politics (Bertelli et. al., 2013). Changes in institutional funding “borne by the political winds” has increased and reduced alternately under different leaderships (Alexander, 2010:186).

⁸ Meanwhile, in the years of increased funding, the government had insisted on instrumental policy goals⁸ (Bell and Oakley, 2015; Upchurch, 2014; Glinkowski, 2011). The demand of New Labour that the arts play a bigger role in tackling social issues had left the sector with the task of increasing social inclusion, assisting with the regeneration projects of deprived areas (Gray, 2007; Upchurch, 2014:193), fulfilling expectations of cultural diversity. At the meantime, arts organizations had also been advised to undertake leadership roles in artistic innovation and experimentation, while still being reminded to reduce their dependency on ACE future subsidy (Upchurch, 2014; Hammonds and Bhandal, 2011; Mirza, 2009).

(McGuigan, 2009), which has arguably given shape to certain priorities and selectivism of artistic forms (Upchurch, 2014; Ridley, 1978).

This build-up of the plural funding rhetoric came soon enough under the administration of Conservative-Liberal Coalition government in 2010 with its ambition to drive the coming together of communities as one 'Big Society' aiming to help "solve the problems they face and build the Britain they want"⁹. The spirit of 'Big Society' required that citizens also assume the responsibility to respond to the social, political and economic trials facing the country since the "government on its own cannot fix every problem" (Giving White Paper, 2011)¹⁰. Under the new reform, renewing the changes Britain needs would involve social action, including steps to foster charitable giving and philanthropy, in the bigger execution of power transfer from central to local government (Giving White Paper, 2011)¹¹. This vision of a new political order, however, presented a parallel political imaginary in the US where a shift in paradigm from market individualism to communitarian liberalism relying extensively on "the metaphors of community, social enterprises and grassroots civic innovation" had taken place (Frere and Reinecke, 2011:118).

At the national level, Cameron's Big Society mantra has been closely compared to Thatcher's 1980s retreat of the state and its financial resources through a political rationality of delegating the responsibility of provisions to social enterprises, charities and voluntary groups in the disappearing of the welfare state (Smith, 2011 in Frere and Reinecke, 2011:118). In its place, civil society has been

⁹ (Giving White Paper, 2011)

¹⁰ In his delivery of the Big Society Speech on 19th July 2010, David Cameron exclaimed: "You can call it liberalism. You can call it empowerment. You can call it freedom. You can call it responsibility. I call it the Big Society".

¹¹ The radical devolution of competence and financial autonomy to the local administration was deemed "the biggest, most dramatic redistribution of power from elites in Whitehall to the man and woman on the street" by opening up "public services to private and charitable providers in order to promote innovation, diversity and responsiveness to public need" (David Cameron, Big Society Speech, 19th July 2010 in Frere and Reinecke, 2011:118).

expected to attend to provisions implicated by the decrease of public spending with repercussions in the kind of giving that is defined by funders instead of actual public needs, which could see the purported democratic accountability through better efficiency of social services be subjected to market forces (Frere and Reinecke, 2011: 119). There, the basis of the reform in private solidarity by demonstrating their shared concerns with those in need of assistance, and choosing to help them escape from their “social blackholes” through realizing their business projects was dedicated to solidarity economy whereby progressive informal multiplicity of independent, local-level organizations ideologically unite to form business alternatives (Smith, 2011; Spicer and Bo’hm, 2007 in Frere and Reinecke, 2011:120). Embedded to this is the concept of mutualism in the organizing of cooperation and reciprocity (Schneiberg, 2007; and Woodin et. al., 2010 in Frere and Reinecke, 2011:126) among the institutionally free and egalitarian society, and the possibility of an alternative economy not unlike seen on the digital platform of crowdfunding, which by then, had gone full force in the US (Graham, 1989 in Frere and Reinecke, 2011:126).

Deemed the toughest fiscal policy since 1945, the austerity agenda post-2008 fiscal crisis has presented to the public a ‘shock doctrine’ (Oakes and Oakes, 2015: 738; Klein, 2008 quoted in Newsinger, 2015: 311) for its hastened implementation of the national economic restructuring that critics argued, has undermined the nation’s social democratic welfare state (Klein, 2008 quoted in Newsinger, 2015: 311). As austerity tightened, grants from central to local government had fallen by 49.3% (£2bn) from 2008 to 2014, threatening non-profit and third sector finance with “serious implications for the long-term sustainability” (NCVO, 2015, quoted in Rimmer, 2018:35). The ensuing cuts on the collective local governments as the primary funder for the arts and cultural activities have put

severe stress on regional arts organizations, which have always depended on them for funding (Harvey, 2016:6). The concern was justified as ACE, too, acknowledged the unknown extent of local governments' funding decisions on the arts in the coming years¹². Hence, when the government announced the extension to the period of austerity from 2010 to 2013, then 2014 to 2015, and later from 2016 to 2018, arts organisations struggled with a legitimate concern over the delayed and uncertain return to the previous state of public funding, and thus, the risk to their survival in the years to come¹³.

The emphasis on mixed funding has most recently cemented with the 2010 austerity agenda in harnessing digital technologies to counter the fiscal ramifications of global recession through the introduction of the government-linked crowdfunding platform *crowdfunder.co.uk*. to encourage cultural giving (Gould, 2019; Frere and Reinecke, 2011; Pharoah, 2011). With the announcement of 2010 as the 'Year of Philanthropy', the Coalition government had assigned DCMS to oversee a ten-point plan towards encouraging "philanthropy across the board" by removing "barriers to giving" and utilizing peer promotion to a "wider culture of giving" with the adoption of honours systems "to better recognize sustained giving at every level, not only amongst the wealthy" (Hunt, 2010). The plan was followed by the declaration of 2011 as the 'Year of Corporate Philanthropy' to boost corporate support for the arts while acknowledging its contribution to a quarter of total private giving. Following the inaugural speech by the secretary of state for DCMS, the announcement to induce corporate philanthropy was made with the awareness that giving to the arts would be a business transaction on the part of

¹² "...local authority budgets are under unprecedented pressure. In some areas significant cuts are being made to museums, libraries and *the arts*. We know that local authorities will be asked to find even more substantial savings in the years to come. It's the biggest challenge arts and culture faces at the moment" (Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair of ACE quoted in Harvey, 2016)

¹³ The end of Austerity was broadcasted on 4th September but with much pessimism and suspicion that it might just merely be lip service to symbolically end public agony (www.bbc.co.uk)

the corporate sector but pointed to the caveat of the exchange, for “as long as it respects the independence and artistic integrity of the recipient” (Hunt, 2010). At this juncture, while corporate philanthropy and arts organizations were being given the assurance of their respective interests, the move had arguably oversimplified the complex relationship in arts patronage with profit-making entities. As seen before, the push for the corporate sector to support the arts is feared to underline the risk of commodification of the arts and culture sector yet again (Upchurch, 2004; Alexander: 2014; Harvie; 2013, Kershaw, 1999).

In the promotion of individual giving through digital transactions as means to benefit both donors and recipients, Jeremy Hunt MP has denied the claim of the philanthropy agenda to counter the cuts in arts funding by equating crowdfunding with the National Lottery as purely a mechanism to tap on partial contribution for the sector (Pharoah, 2011:69). Nevertheless, the government’s refutation for appealing to the benevolence of the society had quickly begun with its immediate reduction in subsidy to ACE, which led critics doubting if philanthropy could actually meet the significant funding gap left by the administration¹⁴, particularly since, even with increased philanthropic wealth, sufficient provision to non-profit sectors would require a significant increase in giving percentage (Pharoah, 2011:69). Additionally, if the utopia of ‘Big Society’ were to be met, there would be a need for donor diversity, and the agility to include economically weaker localities as beneficiaries, considering that the struggle for local arts organizations to attract corporate philanthropy has been difficult as resources tended to flow to major establishments, leaving neglected municipalities suffering from the effects of lower community participation (Pharoah, 2011:74; Glow and Kershaw, 2014 in Upchurch 2014:7).

¹⁴ Critics pointed to the funding gap left by the state when public funding accounts for 24% arts and culture top cause-driven fundraising charities compared to only 4% distribution from private giving (Pharoah, 2011: 70).

1.1.2 Funders and Artistic Productions

While public funding is allocated for both instrumental art (extrinsic art) and avant-garde (intrinsic art), justification for state support during periods of fiscal crises could shift the priority to side more heavily on works which are able to demonstrate their contribution based on a strong ethic of utility (Gray, 2000, 2007; McGuigan, 2009; Throsby, 2010; Belfiore, 2012; Mulcahy, 2017: 2017). More often, Britain's preoccupation with instrumental art can be seen in their educational value and moral undertone, aside from benefits to artists and audience, which are more aligned to the expected logic of practice of the government (Alexander and Bowler, 2014; Knell and Taylor, 2011; Ridley, 1978:455), compared to the "creation of objects beautiful in themselves" (art for art's sake) as heritage to future generations to be sustained for its own sake (Lamarque, 2010; Fenner, 2008; Eikhof and Haunschild, 2007; Ridley, 1978: 455-461). Therefore, certain types of work are considered as "better fit than others", with repercussions on artists wishing to obtain state support, having to fit their work accordingly to the funding priorities of government agencies (Harvey, 2016; Upchurch, 2014:196; Belfiore, 2004). The result is a distortion of realities in the kinds of work that get produced due to a paradoxical system that both enables and constrains, and by doing so, moulds artists and the work they produce (Garber, 2008; Sabrin, 1993; Becker, 1982;). At the confluence between instrumental art and art for art's sake, the struggle of the latter to justify an equal consideration for public funding is admittedly more challenging for its inability to fulfil the economic and social contribution upheld by the funding bodies (Hewinson, 1987:126)¹⁵.

¹⁵ "...the main point at which interference occurs...is the sponsor's choice of what, and what not, to sponsor – inevitably new work, experimental work and any kind of art which challenges the cultural and economic status quo finds it almost impossible to secure sponsorship" (Hewinson, 1987:126)

Although the financial assistance to the arts through the ACE since its predecessors was marked by the intention of avoiding the dangers of government control, “deliberately organized to prevent party-political or governmental-administrative direction”, its arm’s length policy in recent decades has been criticized for its eventual instigation of arts organizations to succumb to governmental political and economic agendas (Bell and Oakley, 2015; Alexander, 2010; Madden, 2009). Thus, receiving public funding meant executing the cultural policies set out by the government of the day with ministerial officials occasionally having their share of influence on ACE since being in the intermediary position of funding disburser to artists, the organization (Bell and Oakley, 2015; Upchurch, 2014; Alexander, 2010). However, despite the non-interventionist approach to culture, artists find their work largely at the discretion of funding administrators, and unavoidably measured against the set criteria of institutional requirements (Hetherington, 2017; Frey, 1999; Hutchinson, 1982). To secure public funding, the arts has been required to demonstrate its value by asserting itself as an instrument of social inclusiveness (among others) alongside the capacity for economic advantage (such as having a multiplier effect), and inspiration in the creative economy (Alexander, 2007; 2011; Belfiore and Bennett, 2010; Upchurch, 2014; Cohen, et al, 2003 and Myerscough, 1988 in Mulcahy, 2017).

Tensions arising from priorities imposed from the outside world to the arts without the intrinsic concern to the sector have led to artists losing their “buffer” from the protection they are supposed to receive from ACE (Upchurch, 2014:198). Although in principle, the ACE should be relatively independent from the political sphere, and therefore, able to insulate artists from the marketplace, in reality, the tighter control of the government has reduced its protection against the weakening of artistic dependency and insulation from “a shortened arm’s length” that has

persisted (Upchurch, 2014:198; Alexander, 2008). Only recently, despite the continuous emphasis on the instrumental benefits of the arts, has there been increased acknowledgement of art's intrinsic benefits as having a valuable spill over effect on the public due to its capacity to intensify concentration, enjoyment, and heightened empathy (McCarthy, et. al. in Upchurch, 2014:4).

Similarly, although public funding is usually assumed to encourage innovative cultural programming¹⁶, this has become highly debatable of late with local government funding in the UK being associated with less risk-taking due to concerns over catering for their entire population, leading to preferential and justifiable support for the more mainstream, popular or safe productions (Abdullah, et al., 2017; Knell, 2011; Smith, 2010; Pierce, 2000; Tusa, 2000). Contributing to the reduced support for avant-garde works is the political orientation of the government of the day in its indirect damper on artistic innovation through changes in its cultural policies concerning access, diversity, public engagement, which effect funding priorities, constituting in differing funding incentives and the strings that come attached to their programming (DiMaggio and Stenberg 1985a, b in Castaner and Campos, 2002: 273).

The link between economic conditions and the arts has pointed to how support towards innovation can stimulate the arts, or handicap the sector from creativity through the lack of support (Baumol, 2006: 341; Noonan in Oakley and O'Connor, 2015; Menger, 2014). Hence, it follows that changes in fiscal policies will dictate how public money is spent, with repercussions on funding decisions that are likely to prioritize benefits to the majority rather than risk-taking which may likely deter the funding of the avant-garde (Hadley and Gray, 2017; Bell and Oakley, 2015;

¹⁶ the scenario is the opposite in the US

Cowen and Tabarrok, 2000). This illustrates the bitter reality of artistic freedom from institutional funders, which although imbued with consideration for survival and sustainability (particularly during the climate of austerity), might be levelled by the plurality of funders. Hence, while the fear of diminishing governmental support is a valid cause for concern, support for the arts from collective individual giving may change the rules of patronage for artists at various stages of practice for potentially readdressing the funding decision through a model of shared patronage, as will be further explored in this research.

1.1.3 Reducing Project Funding Gaps Through Crowdfunding

In many ways, the growth of crowdfunding into a full-fledge industry took off when the constraint of traditional funding (and distrust towards it) gave way to a shift towards the public as providers of funds (Block and Sandner, 2009; Duygan-Bump et al., 2011; Fink, 2012; Mach et al., 2013). Exacerbated by the start-up phenomenon (circa 2010) and success stories of capital-seeking parties in realizing new projects, leveraging the power of collective funders had quickly transpired as an alternative to reduce funding gaps unmet by conventional funding (Reddy and Tan, 2017; Mach, et al, 2014; Steinberg 2012). The crowdfunding historiography demonstrated a trend from the domination of profit-based to the emergence of non-profit projects, thus, denoting a shift from public investors to philanthropists/donors (Hassna, et al., 2018; Liu et. al., 2017; Eikenberry and Breeze, 2015).

Early research in crowdfunding was also marked by a growing evidence of companies beginning to benefit from crowd wisdom (Mannes et. al., 2014; Kleemann, 2008) in helping to effectively exploit market potential and target potential customers (Belleflamme et al., 2010; Hui et al., 2014). Besides the

flexibility of funding acquisition and the fewer formal obligations compared to traditional funding, project founders have benefitted from responses to product testing prior to market release and directions gathered from collective positive signalling and multiplier effects (Hemer et al., 2011; Hienerth and Riar, 2013; Macht and Weatherston, 2014; Surowiecki, 2004). Throughout the process, crowd wisdom began to substitute for 'investors' by signaling market legitimacy to product value and the companies producing them, thereby increasing the chance of securing a customer base (Martin, 2012; Ordanini et. al., 2011). Further inquiry into crowdfunders as investors confirmed their role in lending greater product visibility and product consumption (Burtch et al., 2014), client or audience accessibility, growth in media attention, greater interest in ideas, and involvement of external funders (Polzin et. al., 2018; Mollick and Kuppuswamy, 2014; Gerber, 2012), all of which recognized the use of crowdfunding beyond project financing.

Interest in crowdfunding began to surge after 2010 with priorities of crowdfunding for the next few years leaning towards motives of participation, identification of factors leading to successful funding transactions, analysis of different crowdfunding frameworks and models, signals of product quality and the existence of social networks in crowdfunding activities (Moritz and Block, 2014). Five motives for using crowdfunding were identified as financing, forming relational networks, affirming self capacity, replicating previous success stories, and increasing product awareness (Gerber et. al, 2012), with similar motivations corroborated later as public attention, obtaining product or service feedbacks (Belleflamme et. al, 2013b).

While the proliferation of profit-based entities has persisted in the ensuing years, analysis in performance has begun to spill over into non-profit organizations, which

were found to possess a higher credibility, and therefore, a greater likelihood of reaching funding targets (Belleflemme et al., 2013). Additionally, the permutation of non-profit entities and the response to their campaigns on crowdfunding platforms indicated a harmonizing promise between crowdfunding and social enterprises (Lehner, 2013) which gave way to a focus on maximizing monetary transactions on crowdfunding platforms, monitoring amount and campaign duration, measuring the size of social network, evaluation of product videos, and measuring the geographical proximity to project founders (Frydrych et al., 2014; Hekman and Brussee, 2013; Mollick, 2014; Saxton and Wang, 2013). These studies were extended later by the confirmation of other factors such as social network proxies (including funders connected through *Facebook* friends) and external endorsement and background suitability (Mollick and Kuppuswamy, 2014), which prompted a close connection between non-profits and social networks.

1.1.4 Crowdfunding Creativity: Tangible versus Intangible Projects

The widespread use of modern crowdfunding across sectors may have obscured the fact that the method was earlier used to fund mainly artistic projects (Schulz, 2015; Agrawal et. al., 2013). With the establishment of a number of internet platforms catering for the creative industries¹⁷, crowdfunding has remained relevant in the early-stage financing of independent scenes in music production (Gamble et al., 2017; Galuszka and Bystrov, 2014), and documentary films (Sorenso, 2015; Kocers, 2015; Mollick and Kuppuswamy, 2014; Caetono and Cardoso, 2011; Hemer, 2011) where crowdfunders have contributed to the making of tangible products. However, few have addressed the crowdfunding response to financing ‘products’ which are intangible, not available as pre-purchase, and where rewards received are ‘tokenistic’ or symbolic (Boeuf et. al, 2014; Gerber, et al.,

¹⁷ Among them are *ArtistShare* (since 2001) and *Sellaband* (since 2002)

2012), in raising funds for live performance projects such as theatre (Josefy et al., 2016; Mollick and Nanda, 2015). Due to the experiential and transient nature of performing arts projects, unlike the more enduring products of music albums or films, the motivations to give to such projects have been linked to charitable giving to social causes where no direct return is intended for donors (Gerber et. al, 2012; Cohendet and Simon, 2014). This utility argument has raised a number of inquiries; among those is the investigation into prosocial (Jancenelle and Javalgi, 2018; Boeuf et. al, 2007) and altruistic behaviour (Steigenberger, 2017; Bretschneider et al., 2014; Qiu, 2013), which has conventionally intrigued researchers in economics for the lack of self-interest in human decisions (Zafirovski, 2003; Knox, 1999).

Consequently, the tangible-intangible divide in funding outcomes directed the attention back to the self-interest versus altruism debate in questioning what was felt to be an economic nature of man versus the capacity of man to be selfless. Economists have long concurred that as *homoeconomicus*, human decisions are driven by self-interest, and are therefore confounded by altruistic behaviour of *homoreciprocans*, which accordingly defies the logic of human action (Andreoni, 2006; Bowles and Gintis, 2002). With trends in diversified donation opportunities in creative ventures, altruism has been simultaneously brought to the fore by the growing attention on donor behaviour (Oakley et al., 2012; Batson, 2011) contributing to project realization. Hence, since contemporary crowdfunding is akin to fundraising operating on digital platforms, it appears to replicate similar concerns raised in fundraising, particularly the understanding of exchange between askers and givers as exemplified by the contrast between 'donation-based' and 'reward-based' crowdfunding models. The operating mechanism of donation as opposed to reward operated models which drew upon the integration

of the fields of charitable giving and market exchange on crowdfunding platforms culminated in an even more inextricable explanation than the earlier attempts to justify philanthropy in economic terms suggest¹⁸ (Wiepking and Bekkers, 2012; Andreoni, 2001).

Considering the exchange between funders and recipients is fundamentally the engine that drives crowdfunding, there has been an inherent demand for reciprocity among the funders to be understood in financing of theatre projects where profit is not offered as a return (Tanaka and Volda, 2016; Zvilichovsky et al. 2015). The reciprocal exchange that governs the flow of giving in crowdfunding, therefore, needs to be understood in the distinction between philanthropy which views resource allocation as “a sense of fairness” (Fehr and Fishbacher, 2003) and economics which views resource allocation as effective/optimal distribution. It is within this overlap and distinction that the giving behaviour on crowdfunding platforms can offer explanation for the categories of projects that get funded¹⁹, and illuminate the elusive nature of giving where rewards are often symbolic rather than material (Boeuf et. al, 2014), as observed in the support shown for theatre projects²⁰.

Parallel to the connection between kinship and giving are studies focusing on the individual giver that have characterized giving as an extension of the self into one’s past and future self known as ‘delay discount’ and as one’s extension into social space known as ‘social discount’, in which the decision to give is considered economically rational in the former but irrational in the latter (Sergeant et.al, 2006). Comparatively, this highlights reasons for altruistic behaviour as a permeation of

¹⁸ The section on philanthropy, self-interest versus altruism debate in ‘reward-based’ and ‘donation-based’ crowdfunding will be explained further in *Chapter 2*

¹⁹ such as commercial, social, and artistic

²⁰ *Section 2.2 in Chapter 2* is dedicated to *Reciprocity and Gifting*

cooperation, being part of a commitment pattern and a balancing act between cost and benefit (Rachlin and Jones, 2009; Rachlin and Locey, 2010), which presently corroborate with studies on the role and strength of social networks in crowdfunding efforts. Emotional and familial utilities, which have contributed to donors' commitment to donate (Sergeant et al., 2006) have been challenged by mediated fundraising like crowdfunding where the importance of potential funders on social networks has been elevated to that of friends and families (Agrawal et al., 2011) and that their decision to give has gone beyond mere financial support to the quality control of patronage (Sorensen and Fassiotto, 2011). This reiterates that reciprocity is not only about financial gain but also personal and social benefits, and that while donors might pose less expectation on a material return of investment, there is still an expectation of some kind.

Since donating to theatre productions is essentially cultural giving, crowd patronage of the arts, therefore, invites a return to an older form of private individual giving that largely characterized cultural patronage in the Medieval and Renaissance periods but is now advocating participation among more people unified within a digital realm (Frosio, 2015). In fact, the collective giving to the arts through the crowdfunding model is a reminder of the older artistic patronage with potentially renewed interest in the comparative field of art and economic histories where it resides²¹ (White and Westfield, 2002). Hence, cultural giving through crowdfunding is likely to draw attention to the question of project beneficiaries (Blaug, 2019; Fullerton, 1991), cultural value of projects (Belfiore, 2020; Miles and Gibson, 2016; O'Brien and Oakley, 2015; Frey, 2005), and among others, issues of artistic freedom (Rushton in Towse and Hernandez, 2020; Tanasescu, 2011; Rushton, 2003) underpinning the relationship between artists and their funders.

²¹ This is further elaborated in *Chapter 2, Section 2.1*

The view of “creativity as a gift” (Hyde, 2009) and the idea of gifting towards artistic projects may redefine the collaboration among online communities in transactional relationships realized upon the principles aligning the Gift Economy (Tapscott, 2008), the Sharing Economy (Rushkoff, 2016), and the Debt Economy (Frosio, 2015) upon which non-profit crowdfunding market significantly operates. Thus, cultural giving, or the act of contributing to the arts for the betterment of the sector (Lloyd, 2006) is arguably seeing an evolution in the way individuals are donating with smaller but in aggregated amounts which although has existed before, is increasingly ubiquitous on digital platforms. As a platform phenomenon, the aim of crowdfunding is to reach out to as many prospective backers as possible, however, this usually has to start with project makers’ closest social relations before their network of givers can be further expanded (Kuppuswamy and Bayus, 2018; Columbo, et. al., 2015; Agrawal et. al., 2011). While closest social relations are expected as early contributors to crowdfunding campaigns, research has not interrogated with any rigour on how such expectation and dependency rest on neither them nor the fundraisers.

1.1.5 The Rise of Online Fundraising

Fundraising underwent a rapid evolution with the rise of social media in the last decade, permanently changing donor engagement and how this has required a re-strategizing of traditional methods and approaches. Most significantly, social network effects have reduced transaction cost (Steffen and Huck, 2020), improved fundraising transparency and organizational efficacy (Bhati and McDonnell, 2020), accelerated information transmission drastically from face-to face to online solicitations, which on the whole, has led to the expansion of social capital marketplace of value through electronic word of mouth (eWOM)(Bennett, 2018). By 2015, individual online fundraising has brought in major income to UK

nonprofits, after reaching the highest collection in Germany and US, surpassing over a billion of the currency threshold in each respective country such that presently, non-profits that depend on mixed funding would have already adopted online fundraising (Meer, 2014; Smith et. al, 2015; (Bennett, 2018) Altman, et al, 2019 cited in Adena and Steffen, 2020).

The biggest permanent change to traditional fundraising strategies that was engendered by the disruption of network “vortex” came in the exponentially larger network size, which has allowed fundraisers to reach a wider population of potential donors than ever before (Bhati and Mc Donnell 2019; Tempel et. al., 2016). With access to donors’ network, fundraisers have been able to exercise greater peer pressure method, as evident in the strong support of FFF network in fundraising projects whose messages on social media function as “social currency” that draws in further donations and paints a positive image of the non-profits (Romano and Yildirim 2001 in Buraschi and Cornelli, 2014). Concurrently, fundraisers have accommodated to disseminating “relevant, informing, and inspiring content” by integrating all social media platforms and offline efforts to maintain long-term communication with their social media followers (Tempel et. al., 2016:402, Bhati and Mc Dinnell, 2019 and Tempel et. al., 2016). The streamlining and coordination of campaigns have also allowed fundraisers to recognize expressions of “self-identity” which aligns millennials with the propensity to contribute to “making the world a better place”, as opposed to older generations who tend to donate for others’ basic needs (Weinstein and Barden, 2017). This distinction highlights the importance for fundraisers to employ appropriate solicitation strategies by accommodating to potential donors’ preferred means of communication and understanding the values that different generations uphold.

Further studies on donor engagement via *Facebook* communications have shown how the platform humanizes the organisational brand and simultaneously promote the obligation to donate brought on by the psychological closeness that donors feel through their interactions thereby increasing the chance for organizations to upgrade one-off short-term donors into committed long-term donors (Bennett, 2018). The effectiveness of social media platforms as tools of dialogue has been corroborated by a study of *Twitter* in its facilitation of communality while promoting a more open and transparent communication among the collective donor community with other stakeholders, aspects of which had been more restrained in traditional fundraising (Stiver, et. al., 2015 in Bennett, 2018; Kuch et al, 2011, Bortree et al, 2009 in Bhati and McDonnell, 2019; Bhati and McDonnell, 2019). Ironically however, without direct social interactions, online fundraising has left fundraisers with a risk of 22% loss of donations following the time given for potential donors to deliberate, unless presented with additional information about the campaign soon after. Hence, considering people would generally avoid donations if given the opportunity to avert, there is a high chance for online solicitations to be ignored without the presence of social pressure (Bhati and McDonnell, 2019; Della Vigna et. al., 2012; Andreoni et. al., 2017 in Adena and Steffen, 2020). Additionally, despite the capacity to generate short-term donations, fundraising reminders have been infamous for annoying potential donors, which have been shown to increase the likelihood of donors to unsubscribe from the nonprofit's mailing list (Damgaard and Gravert, 2018 in Adena and Steffen, 2020).

To some extent, fundraisers' use of persuasive tactics of 'doing good to live a good life' to entice individuals into donating (Bennett 2018; Saul, 2011), and equally, the emphasis on opportunity cost that is lost from not making a contribution to a cause have often deterred giving. In particular, the classic "cajoling method" meant to

heighten a sense of obligation or duty to provide has been shown to emotionally offend wealthy donors who might, at best, grudgingly comply but cut ties with the organization afterwards. Instead, fundraisers have been advised to adopt a “discernment approach” with their high net worth donors through an exercise that guides them to identify their own values and invite long-term committed giving (Schervish and Havens 2002 in Weinstein and Barden, 2017). Nevertheless, rather than positive framing, solicitations from majority donors have traditionally thrived on guilt appeals, a negative framing strategy that oftens include the sharing of stereotyped images of beneficiaries, which partly function as fundraisers’ “shock tactics” to evoke compassion and thus, persuade people to donate (Dahl, 2017). Consequently, the last decade has brought in criticisms against techniques that pressurize donors by reminding fundraisers of their duty of care to the public although their responsibility to non-profits requires leveraging on extreme emotions (Sargeant, 2018; MacQuillin, 2016 on Bennett, 2018). It has been shown that resorting to excessive emotional appeals, frequent solicitations, and a diversion of expenditure from the project’s core mission are counterproductive to fundraising by exacerbating compassionate fatigue that eventually numbs and desensitizes potential donors to the noble cause at stake, although researchers assert that attaining an ethical balance is possible (MacQuillin, 2016 in Bennett, 2018).

Largely, even when online fundraising strategies are adopted by crowdfunding, the philosophy of traditional fundraising has been retained. In particular, the principle that people give to people based on a relationship they identify with the asker, trusting that their investment will generate positive impact, and equally as a gift to people who help other people, has remained unchanged (Weinstein and Barden, 2017). Hence, as before, online fundraising has continued to be about the individual fundraiser rather than the organization, whose narrative makes donors

feel appreciated through their connection with the project, resulting in a reciprocal relationship fostered from the “psychological identity” of the communal connection felt rather than a purely transactional giving (Alborough, 2017 and MacQuillan et. al., 2016 in Bennett 2018). The concern of fundraising in recruiting new donors, retaining donor loyalty and upgrading single value gifts to secure long-term giving whether online or not, has continued to be seen in the direct effort to apply donation grids or donor differentiation strategy to persuade people to give higher donations, or at least donate relative to their means, if not similar to the amount others have given (Adena and Steffen, 2020; Weinstein and Barden, 2017; (Bennett, 2018). Until recently, fundraisers’ dread of small and infrequent giving that reduces the profitability of traditional fundraising, known disapprovingly as ‘slacktivism’, warrants contestation since its very description as an act of donating online with the tendency to follow social media groups, is, by the current crowdfunding understanding, merely a norm (Bennett 2018).

Representing an organization, the connection of fundraising with branding in communicating organisational values and operations, presents a big part of its brand delivery promise (Bennett, 2018). While traditional fundraising has thrived based on “social competence and trust”, emotion and assertiveness”, and “sophistication in the portrayal of the organization”, with social media, branding shifts into an increased attachment to human characteristics (Bennett, 2018). As gathered from a brand personality analysis of UK non-profits, successful fundraising is distinguishable by “brand warmth” (as illustrated by the number of likes), acquisition of endorsements, and communication of “symbolic value” (Bernotter et al, 2016 in Bennett, 2018). Furthermore, the ability for non-profits to immediately respond to social media dialogues is found to create a “control mutuality” that demonstrates valued expressions of opinions which, in turn,

cultivate donor psychological engagement with fundraisers and the organizations they represent, hence, increasing donor retention (Algharat et. al., 2018 in Bennett 2018).

With the birth of a social capital market made of a new generation of actors who appeal to social justice and personal development among other social change, online fundraising is also seeing the government as a keen purchaser of outcomes through smart public-private-partnerships (Saul, 2011). Considering the receptivity towards this mindset, some organizations have moved towards a donor-centred approach that has benefitted from the interaction with donors and the recognition of needs which are in line with organisational mission and priorities (Burk, 2003 in Weinstein and Barden, 2017). At other times, organizations are expected to set the pace through a financial leadership in order to draw in support from individual donors, as demonstrated in leadership grants or variations of seed or match funding (Weinstein and Barden, 2017).

Generally, while donors have continued to give to nonprofits with “better congruence” to their interests (Bennett, 2018) which underlined their expression of values (Frumkin in Sail, 2011), the role of wealthy donors as hyperagency has persisted for its greater capacity to affect change, or skew towards funding directions as practiced in traditional offline fundraising (Schervish in Weinstein and Barden, 2017). Due to the consistent formula of the top 20% donors contributing to 80% fundraising needs, non-profits have exercised a mutual benefit approach through the customization of high net worth individuals for participation in organized activities beyond giving (Bennett 2013; 2018). Suggestions of elevating donors to partners, in fact, have anticipated ways for non-profits to respond more dynamically to challenging financial and social environments (Waters, 2016). This

points to the direction that non-profits, the new generation of donors, and philanthropists, are becoming more aligned in their cooperative partnership, hence, allowing the facilitation of changes that they collectively want realized. At the intersection of impact and financial viability, an integrated and adaptable strategy has been proposed to “re-imagine a right mix for sustainability” in the future of fundraising, which are arguably exercised in crowdfunding efforts (Weinstein and Barden, 2017; Gierczak, 2016; Zimmerman and Bell, 2014).

1.1.6 Friends-Family-Fans Network (FFF)

With a focus on arts entrepreneurial finance (Agrawal et al., 2010) and donor motivation (Lambert and Schwenbacher, 2010) the inquiry into the main supporters of artistic ventures soon led to the role of close social relations. While beginner project founders usually fund the projects themselves, insufficient funds typically force them to seek financial assistance from families and friends, unless they have been fortunate enough to obtain substantial funding from business angels and other external funding sources (Harrison, 2017; Collins and Pierrakis, 2012). The same pattern has been observed in the financing of new entrepreneurs, and early phases of their new ventures (Paschen, 2017; Yang et al., 2016). Moreover, with the existence of crowdfunding on digital platforms the uncomfortable process of face-to-face solicitations has been replaced with a platform mediation, the consistency of which eliminates information asymmetries about the projects set up in verifiable campaign pages, and a platform interface which allows for project authentication, which together lend legitimacy to the fundraising effort (Courtney et al., 2017; Frydrych et al., 2014; 2016). The transplantation of ‘making the ask’²², or the act of soliciting funds onto a platform has also arguably eased the challenges that comes with asking directly by creating

²² ‘The ask’ is a term customarily used in philanthropic and charitable giving to refer to the act of asking for donations (Andreoni, et al. 2017; Fredericks, 2017)

a psychic distance that allows for the process to be better understood as a meaningful undertaking (Younkin and Kashkooli, 2016). In fact, the extensive and expansive support of new ventures by close social relations has been linked to this aspect of professional mediation (Gerber and Hui, 2016).

With the early phase of fund solicitations taking place offline prior to online pledges on live crowdfunding campaigns (Skirnevskiy, et.al., 2017; Colombo, 2015), studies found that 'Friends-Family-Fans' (Kotha and George, 2012; Berger and Udell, 1998) have been key in prompting early donations among social relations and individuals who are more distantly connected by signalling the accomplishment of the funding target (Kuppuswamy, V. and Bahyus, B.L., 2017; Mollick, E., 2014). As this first level of funders provide the initial 30% tranche of funding which increases the odds of getting fully funded by 90% (Kuppuswamy and Bayus, 2017; Mollick, E.; 2014; Lehner, O.M., 2013), the role of the FFF network in cementing enough confidence to attract the rest of the donors growing from the exponential links from their social network is critical. This emphasizes on the function of early 'investors' in the initial stage of a campaign as crucial to establishing confidence in a project, and thereby, encouraging more relationally distant donors to subsequently contribute. Hence, at the early stage of a campaign, a clear advantage stands for project founders whose close social relations and associates have the disposable income to help seed the project. With the identification of the FFF network as funding initiators and facilitators of other funders, the connection illuminated the role of social capital and social network in reaching funding targets, as seen in funders prioritizing entrepreneurs with whom they are personally connected even if it means investing in multiple projects simultaneously (Agrawal et. al, 2010).

Furthermore, with in the financing of new musical artist-entrepreneurs, particularly, the FFF network of donors have been identified as a distinct group of funders who are active at the beginning of the campaign, forming a third (and largest) contribution of the total funding goal, most of whom are geographically close to the project (Agrawal et. al, 2013; 2010). Nevertheless, other than the consideration of geographical proximity where funders and the local areas could benefit from the project, this demonstrates priority investing in projects by individuals known to funders which essentially encourage funding default in the artist rather than the project value itself, further implying that the success of a crowdfunding project is first and foremost a validation of social relations. Despite the strength of support among social relations, donor participation among the FFF network has been noted to lessen with subsequent projects (Boeuf et. al., 2014), a condition, recognized as donor fatigue, which highlights the problem with repeated or prolonged use of crowdfunding that may be counter-productive to cultural entrepreneurs, and the overall theatre ecology affected by the scarcity of public funding (Harvie, 2013).

With the pressure of fundraising online, the emotive challenges of fund solicitation that comes with making 'the ask', despite being expressed in blogs and online forums²³ among networks of artists, has only met with a dearth of research, particularly pertaining to the contribution of FFF networks and beyond, especially with art organizations beyond their early stage. Studies with a focus on funders have yet to corroborate the claims that artists soliciting funds from their social relations suffer from the after effects of crowdfunding, which include a sense of indebtedness and guilt from 'commodifying' their closest networks (Harvie, 2015; Bault, 2013), presenting a gap which this research would undertake.

²³ as highlighted in www.devotedanddisgruntled.com, 2015, 2017,2018; www.theatrebubble.com, 2016.

1.1.7 Democratization and Egalitarian Potential of Crowdfunding

One of the most poignant remarks brought on by the digital technology of modern crowdfunding has been prompted by its potential to awaken the democratic and egalitarian capacity to invigorate economies among more people (Davies, 2014; Bannerman, 2013), thus, offering a “more level playing field” for those previously excluded from funding opportunities (Mollick and Robb, 2016; Davidson and Poor, 2015; Green and Tunstall, 2015). However, occasionally this expectation has been met with contradicting results with crowdfunding merely reflecting the existing stratification that continues to “empower already charismatic people” (Davidson and Poor, 2015), raising concerns for nepotist giving²⁴ also in the crowdfunding of theatre projects (Harvie, 2015). Rather than fertile grounds to exercise cultural democracy as intended, there exists its unintended equal capacity for crowdfunding to privilege some artists over others in steering funding outcomes that could contribute towards an imbalance of mutual responsibility among society at large (Harvie, 2015). I posit that these concerns raise alarms about the role of social capital as both asset and liability for project makers, and the tendency for backers to donate to projects by virtue of their relation to the soliciting artists rather than the value of the projects themselves to the society.

On another level, although the move to philanthropic giving through crowdfunding may have allowed new and smaller arts organizations to access small financial contribution from members of the public, the approach has simultaneously increased anxiety over the legitimacy it lends in shifting the social responsibility of the state to its citizens (Harvie, 2015). By assisting in the funding of artistic projects, the good intention of the crowd is seen to inevitably facilitate the diminishing duty of the state and its resistance towards social responsibility as

²⁴ originating in FFF networks

seen traditionally in strong anti-public funding advocates in the US, similarly with the move for reduction in public funding in the UK to increase reliance on private funding made prevalent by the Thatcher legacy and its resonance with the later Coalition government (Harvie, 2013; McGuigan, 2012; Alexander and Rueschemeyer, 2005; Peacock, 1999). Hence, cultural giving through crowdfunding has been argued to be equivocally a government's relief from cultural funding which further reinforces reduced state support.

Emerging from the conflation between giving to culture and state patronage are tensions arising in questions of cultural value (Belfiore, 2018; Walmsley, 2018; O'Brien, 2010), cultural taste and omnivorous consumption (Wright, 2011; Warde et. al., 2007), pointing out the age-old debate of instrumental versus intrinsic art (Belfiore and Bennett, 2008), culminating in the extent of artistic freedom when being funded by the crowd instead of the state, despite the crowd's purported democratic leanings and the state's arm's length policy. Hence, as highlighted earlier in the replication of funding patterns in crowdfunding to mimic the state in its funding decisions, I argue that both the intended and unintended manifestations of giving to artistic projects by the crowd require further probing. Together, these developments bring forth the inquiry into artists' experience of being funded by the crowd, which will be scrutinized in this study with specific reference to theatre.

1.1.8 Specificities of Crowdfunded Theatre Projects

The earliest study to concentrate on the crowdfunding of theatre projects set out to compare how reciprocity, with its composition of charitable giving and social cooperation fares in comparison to a successful generic crowdfunding model (Boeuf et. al., 2014; Ordanini et. al, 2011:444). The crowdfunding success of theatre projects in the US was marked by the exercise of prosocial behaviour, an

aspect which theatre makers elsewhere have since been advised to consider emulating in order to achieve similar campaign success (Boeuf et. al., 2014; Ordanini et. al, 2011). Theatre's offering of intangibles rather than reproducible market products which often distinguish it from other crowdfunded projects is also typified by its need to stage performances, therefore tying it to a venue in a particular locale (Rogers, 2012:68). In the case of theatre especially, these local spaces present networking opportunities for the artistic community and audience members that allow for the forming of local peer and communal support for work of intrinsic value²⁵, which often characterizes productions of local artists (Kottasz, 2004). The quantitative study highlighted a few determinants of successful campaigns for theatre projects: the role of symbolic rewards²⁶ in fuelling backer prosocial motivation, the role of reinforced reciprocity when project initiators themselves back other projects, and the fatigue effect from a shrinking social circle in subsequent crowdfunded projects. In addition, giving to theatre has been shown to exhibit a number of specificities, which delineate it from a generic crowdfunding project in donors' avoidance of material rewards, response to social causes rather than business pitches, and enhancement of public image from prosocial behaviour (Cox, et. al., 2018; Boeuf, et al., 2014).

In the early years of rapid escalation and infiltration of large crowdfunding platforms from the US, Canadian practitioners have forewarned indie theatre makers against the narrative of crowdfunding success, which downplayed the reality of substantial "lost dollars"²⁷ from their own social networks who are actually paying for charges to platform service providers when non-commercial projects need to rely on every dollar raised (Dault, 2014). Such scepticism towards

²⁵ art for art's sake

²⁶ such as public acknowledgment

²⁷ According to Dault, (2014), project makers lose 6% to 13% from the amount they raised to crowdfunding platforms.

corporations, which essentially earn money from people, had asserted from early on that it would have made more sense for small independent theatre makers to collect donations directly from private donors. In attracting backers, theatre makers were also cautioned on their promise of perks, as not only would “well-wishers” normally decline them but also because the pre-occupation with managing perks could compromise their work (Dault, 2014). While crowdfunding platforms may thrive within the digital community, online campaigns, which thrive on “momentum”, “motivation”, and “virality”, in reality do not contribute much in gaining the support from the wider public (Dault, 2014). Rather, they would be feeding on the goodwill of their own friends and family, whom despite their kind disposition would unlikely donate more than once (Dault, 2014).

The normalization of projects being crowdfunded has signalled a concern for the continuing decrease in public funding for public goods in the government’s effort to increase economic efficiency. In the last decade, private funding²⁸ has financed 86% of the overall theatre industry and 70% of NPOs where ACE investment has reduced by 4% in subsequent years and onwards²⁹. With a reduction by more than 50% in local government funding, small cultural organizations with no ACE funding face serious implications (Harvie, 2015), which may see them resorting to popular programmes instead of quality and innovation, to offset their loss of subsidy (Stockenstrand and Ander, 2014; Kershaw, 1999).

1.1.9 New Directions in Crowdfunding

With 20% out of 27% overall digital activities by theatre companies have been used for crowdfunding purposes, the employment of the alternative funding means has not slowed down in the last quarter of the decade (mtm and NESTA, 2017).

²⁸ including philanthropy

²⁹ 2008/2009 through 2013/2014 (Hetherington, 2015)

From its humble origin in the Gift Economy, the Crowdfunding Economy is currently a fully-fledged field that has developed the concept of monetary and financial ecologies (Langley and Leyshon, 2017). In the latest report on the feasibility of crowdfunding as a mechanism to alleviate the increasing pressure upon the public sector, the philosophy of crowdfunding in re-imagining a “fairer, more equitable, and more sustainable” future is considered to be underutilised despite its known financial and non-financial gain (Davis and Cartwright, 2019). The proposal for the public to participate in crowdfunded investments of companies with clear social and environmental goals which are aligned to the needs and aspirations of the local community being currently underway suggests that the evolution of crowdfunding is still taking place despite the concerns expressed in previous studies. The seeping of crowdfunding into a more private layer of formerly publicly funded enterprises and organizations as a plural investment strategy is indicative of its growing mainstream influence; might this be a way for theatre companies (already concerned with social outcomes) to function sustainably in the near future as part investment and part community-focused? Moving onwards, there is a clear indication that the government's previous call for organizational resilience has morphed into social and environmental sustainability to outsource part of its social responsibility through the democratic participation of its citizens (Davis and Cartwright, 2019). This trajectory of a probable future of shared patronage between government funding and private giving holds the expectation for the sustainability of organizations to be met partly from cumulative individual donations. As this has already taken place in the arts sector from the start of the decade³⁰, how plural funding play out from the micro to the macro levels of the funding ecology can be observed through the experience of theatre

³⁰ The platform *patreon.com*, for example, which was founded in 2013 as a way for fans to become active contributors to the creative work they love has since intermediated an income stream for more than 200,000 artists, with more than \$2 billion sourced from over 6 million micro-patrons in 2020. The platform, like *kickstarter.com* began in the US before being made available worldwide.

makers, and equally, the response of their backers towards funding solicitations and the considerations³¹ involved in maintaining the support for theatre productions elaborated in this thesis.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organized across ten chapters. *Chapter 1* introduces the topic by outlining the research objectives, rationale and research questions. It then provides the research background to the crowdfunding of theatre projects by highlighting key debates in the area.

Chapter 2 outlines the underlying principles of gifting/giving by extracting the micropolitics that problematizes the artist-funder relationship. It delves into the various notions of giving/gifting by unveiling the power and negotiation in theatrical patronage, degrees of altruistic and self-interested motivations in philanthropic giving, the virtues of large and small giving by individuals with different classes of wealth, the paradox of reciprocity in gifting, and the evolution of social solidarity over time.

Chapter 3 details the justification for Social Capital Theory and its critiques, relaying relevant theoretical conceptualizations, which provide the language to communicate the research findings, whilst pointing to classifications that have emerged from the research.

Chapter 4 accounts for the research methodology adopted, expounding on the research methods employed, and articulates the challenges faced in the process of conducting the research.

³¹ such as social capital, network structures, principles of gifting/giving, and theatre makers' stages of practice

Chapter 5 presents the numerical data and observations obtained from the crowdfunding campaign pages of *crowdfunder.co.uk* for theatre projects to highlight the trends of online backing on this local platform. It provides insight into the cases weighed in the empirical chapters.

The first and second subsidiary research questions are discussed across *Chapters 6, 7 and 8*. *Chapter 6* is concerned with the experience of Graduate Theatre Companies as users of crowdfunding whilst considering their transition from students to new entrants in the industry. It identifies the structural barriers to funding they face for lacking professional experience, and possessing a narrow network of social capital.

Chapter 7 brings to the fore the experience of Individual Artists with crowdfunding, as micro cultural entrepreneurs with a broader network of social capital than new Graduate Theatre Companies, but usually smaller than that of Established Theatre Companies. Functioning as sole traders, their priorities in financial survival and sustainability have largely shaped their utilization of crowdfunding. By adapting to the period of austerity, they gravitate towards receptivity to co-creation, and artistic facilitation of instrumental art that is flexible to the demands of the community.

Chapter 8 reveals the experience of Established Theatre Companies with the advantage of existing bottom-up grassroots support and a vertical network structure of top-down institutional assistance but challenged by their scepticism of crowdfunding due to their position as digital immigrants, and the mechanism novelty compared to conventional funding methods. It reveals their concerns with the risk to their reputation in asking for donations from the public instead of institutions, and the foreseeable shift in funding responsibility of the arts from

institutional stewardship.

Aligned with the micro-meso-macro approach, *Chapter 9* then answers the overarching research questions by drawing out the motivations and concerns of crowdfunding by synthesizing the findings from the consideration of the three categories of theatre makers and relating their fundraising outcomes to the network they have inherited from their social capital. The chapter brings together earlier principles behind giving to theatre, and evaluating its democratic potential alongside notions of network structures and capital convertibility. It relates how the dynamics of social actors in cultural participation have given rise to the visibility of cohorts of new and late entrants to theatre, and considers how this has manifested itself into the larger theatre landscape.

Chapter 10 concludes the thesis with the research summary, its contribution to knowledge and personal value, limitations as well as recommendations for future study.

Chapter 2

PRINCIPLES OF GIFTING/GIVING

This chapter traces the structures and mechanics of crowdfunding back to the principles of gifting/giving. With a thematic link to the notions of gifting/giving, I draw connections from a bricolage of related theories to outline the assumptions underlying the financial support for theatre as exemplified in the relationship between donors and recipients. The aim of the chapter is to illuminate notions of giving and counter-giving by underlining the micropolitics governing the seemingly uncomplicated act of theatrical patronage, the paradox of gifting in reciprocal exchange, the human aspiration to flourish through philanthropic giving and charitable donations, the virtuous signification of magnificence and liberality, and the maintenance of social solidarity and cohesiveness in human relationships that drives and justifies giving. It opens up the existing tropes of understanding the motivations of givers (be it individuals, communities, or institutions) and the 'contract' that gifting/giving imposes upon receivers which points to the mobilization of resources between actors as characterized by their connection to each other, and thus, a preliminary to identifying 'the crowd' in crowdfunding campaigns. Confirming the persistence of exchange between actors to be often apparent but largely obscure, the chapter links the context of gifting/giving amidst austerity with a theoretical framing that inquires into funding solicitations occurring across theatre makers' levels of social capital.

2.1 Theatrical Patronage

Theatrical patronage is a late development born out of the study of arts patronage, and by virtue of belonging to the field, inherits the issues that pervade the overarching realm of arts patronage. The study of the Early Modern English period accounts for the history of theatrical patronage that is wrought with the discourse

of power, politics and ideology, along with the added pressure of scrutiny and control brought by the presence of language to which music patronage, for instance, was never subjected (White and Westfall, 2002). Theatre's portrayal of public life, whether real, or imagined, made it a medium of transmission capable of shaping and being shaped by structures of influence, hence, signalling the ongoing negotiations between patrons and theatre makers during these times.

Due to the embedded psyche governing social reality, theatre patronage has articulated a relationship of bondage through the 'generous' and 'honourable' act of gift-givers to artists (Sheerin, 2011). However, despite patron's rarely sufficient contribution, recipients have been placed in the dilemma of insulting the patrons by not accepting their gifts or being in incessant financial gratitude by accepting them (Sheerin, 2011). Declining these gifts would mean disengaging from the relationship while receiving them would indicate the desire for continuing patronage, both at the expense of the recipients' unease. Such a situation points to the act of gift-giving as exerting hegemony that goes beyond its 'symbolic value' to the 'symbolic alchemy' of capital recognition, which process naturalizes relations of dominance/exploitation into relations of affection/paternalism (Sheerin, 2011; Mauss, 2002). This juxtaposition displaces the discourse of control with the discourse of giving by drawing attention to the destructive aspects of gift-giving that could breed antagonistic, disruptive, and socially distinctive outcomes (Sheerin, 2011).

In theorizing theatrical patronage, Westfall (2006) extrapolates its five characteristics: micropolitics, sign system, ideology, relationship, and autonomy. The micropolitics of theatre patronage lies in its role as a vehicle that enables theatres to represent various forms of public life. In her study, theatres were

battlefields demonstrating solidarity, patriotism and treason, made possible by the practice of patronage. Plays were staged during this period as the subtext of a larger context and were key to performing the “representational encodings of public life” (White and Westfall, 2006). Here, patronage activities articulated the power to intervene in the behaviour of political subjects at a more individual level with the means to shape public perceptions, encompassing common beliefs, attitudes and judgement (White and Westfall, 2006). Thus, the act of patronage was involved not only as a form of regulation but also in the examination of governing polity of the larger populace. Theatre’s capacity to scrutinize, coordinate and influence made it a valuable agency to mediate the experience of regional and national concerns on stage (White and Westfall, 2006). Through comparative observations of scholars, Westfall identifies the engagement of elaborate semiotics that communicates social and political ordering signifying the dynamic ascendancy and demotion of power in theatrical patronage. The changing hands of theatrical patronage were often an indication of the reorganization of the ruling order (White and Westfall, 2006). Thus, the practice of patronage simultaneously spoke of a sign-system illustrating the mark of power pervading the politics and psychology of the period.

Underlying the types of patronage over time is the ideology of generosity (White and Westfall, 2006). The patronage of theatre, specifically, was permeated with ongoing compromises of ideological binaries between the public and private, text and context, commodity and labour (White and Westfall, 2006). This ideology was reflected in the notion of direct and indirect obligation that held both patrons and artists in a union or collaboration. At the same time, this binding relationship had a way of exercising various degrees of influence on each party and onto the public, which saw subversive notions considered too risky to be enacted on their own

(White and Westfall, 2006). However, together, the permeation occurred more organically and seeped into each other more seamlessly. Hence, patronage was capable of functioning as a naturalizing tool to otherwise coercive ideas, realized through a sense of obligation transacted between patrons and artists.

Perhaps the most crucial aspect of Westfall's theorization of theatrical patronage is the relationship between patrons and artists. On this note, Foster points to the display of power and wealth exercised through patronage that had appealed to aristocrats for centuries (Foster cited in White and Westfall, 2006). The history of theatrical patronage was therefore, frequently characterized by the reinforcement of the class power of aristocratic patrons. More broadly, the relationship between theatre patrons and recipients, however, could take a number of forms: alliance, parasitic, reciprocity, and competition (White and Westfall, 2006).

Alliance and kinship with the patron class tended to result in a complex climate of being simultaneously close yet public (White and Westfall, 2006; Henaff, 2013). Often, theatrical patronage is also characterized as reciprocal, illustrated by patron-client mutual obligation. However, it was also common for theatrical artists and their patrons to behave parasitically toward each other. These characteristics point to the fluidity of the relationship between artists and their patrons whereby artists could adopt patrons who were more generous or powerful and discontinue the patronage of those whose reputation had been damaged (White and Westfall, 2006:27). Such was the freedom afforded to theatrical artists during the English Renaissance when the choice of patronage worked much like the marketplace (White and Westfall, 2006; McLuskie, 1991; Payne, 1991). Cases where multiple patrons committed to a single patronage, thus, forming multiple competing orders of the religious, social and political were also evident, demonstrating a constant

and active re-ordering of a society in the process of negotiating its values in shared patronage (White and Westfall, 2006:27).

A final characteristic of theatrical patronage concerns artists' autonomy, which increases when they obtain both private and public patrons. As noted in the late Tudor period, which first saw the patronage from both parties, the model of theatrical patronage had shifted from paternalism to patronage (White and Westfall, 2002; Abercrombie and Hill, 1976). Under the exclusive patronage of either private or public patron in the paternalistic model, artists tended to be robbed of their freedom, choice and responsibility (White and Westfall, 2006). Later, the combination of public and private patrons made way for a patronage model based on mutual binding obligations where patrons and artists could hold one another accountable (Goodell, 1985). Nevertheless, as the paternalistic model was being replaced by the income obtained from the fluctuation between aristocratic patronage and the paying public, theatre had also become commodified, forcing a re-evaluation of what it meant to be a patron (Goodell, 1985). While Westfall's theories highlight the interlocking patterns of patronage relationship, addressing theatre artists as clients implies a position that is considerably different than how they are seen today from being the one to be pleased to the one who has to please the patron. Hence, the locus of power of a theatrical artist has certainly changed from being a client, in Tudor times, to that of cultural entrepreneur in the neoliberal marketplace where the soliciting of funds from mixed sources is a struggle in sustaining one's art and survival in the industry.

In theory, the plurality of aggregated private giving in the crowdfunding model would likely diffuse the infiltration of micropolitics, flatten hierarchical relations, and

therefore, reducing tendencies for hegemony, otherwise seen in paternalistic modes of funding. The shift from the singular or few to mass funding sources should theoretically dilute possible forms of control that would likely emerge from the archetypal dominance of the funder over the recipient. While the ideology of generosity Sheerin outlined earlier may still serve the crowd patronage of theatre productions through its direct and indirect obligation to contribute, the process inadvertently forms a union and collaboration between both parties as they come together to address causes. Hence, the donation of small amounts by many funders would simultaneously give shape to democratic decision-making in productions which both parties want to see materialized. Nonetheless, this is not to deny that funding disparities in the crowdfunding model may replicate paternalistic models within its own microcosm, since in the absence of institutional funding, the funding of theatre may well reside with its highest funder who holds the capacity to 'control' aspects of theatre production and consumption, thus, eventually resigning crowdfunding to a marketplace. Sheerin's observations in the display of wealth, alliance, kinship and reciprocity in theatre patronage, may even be more pronounced in crowdfunding where funding solicitations and giving transactions operate in a public realm of the digital platform.

The purported egalitarian aspect of crowdfunding which promises an avenue for theatrical artists to create without having to conform to conditions that usually come as part and parcel of larger singular funders in the form of institutional or corporate funding, however, may find that relying on the generosity of the public potentially raise sensitivities that were perhaps less of a concern before. Artists' overdependence upon their social relations may surface as an exploitation of donors' charitable qualities in the continuous expectation of filling in the funding

gap rather than insisting that designated authorities distribute their share of public monies.

The sharing of funding responsibilities can already be seen in the return of match funding with an experimentation of the scheme under NESTA³², as a mechanism that combines funds raised from the public³³ and private³⁴ partnership, thus, bringing a different set of funding dynamics into the equation. This sets out a funding scene whereby projects without enough funds are ‘competing’ for backers’s generosity with projects which have been promised, or contractually secured a specific amount from institutional funders, thereby inviting differing perspectives on projects with institutional approval and those without, which then raises the distinction between project types or project makers themselves in qualifying for institutional funding or otherwise. Eventually, this would give way to the crowding-in/crowding-out phenomena, which either draws in or drives away potential backers for perceiving that a project may deserve to be helped more than others because of its capacity to obtain institutional funding, or in spite of it (Brook, 2000). Such tactical mechanism to attract giving by playing on the psychology of funders’ sympathy and empathy as witnessed in previous match funding models, has re-surfaced with crowdfunding³⁵ (Batson et. al., 2015; Granzin and Olsen, 1991 cited in Basil et. al., 2008). Inevitably, the question of institutional validation as opposed to public validation would come into play, with possible repercussions on the kinds of work that inevitably shape the larger theatre landscape.

³² elaborated in *Chapter 5*

³³ such as ACE, the National Lottery, local government, and building societies

³⁴ such as trusts and foundations, building societies and individual donors

³⁵ illustrated in NESTA’s experimentation

2.2 Reciprocity and Gifting

A concept in the field of social anthropology, reciprocity has received a renewal of attention in the wake of the digital gift economy which stands as a reminder of how it has a long-embedded human history that permeates various levels and geographies of societies. Mauss' work, in particular, outlines the fundamental operations and repercussions embedded in the theory of reciprocity centred on the paradox of gifting, which he expounds across five principles.

Firstly, a gift stands for giver's sacrifice for the recipient (Bowditch, 2001). If the act of giving takes place in a public space, givers are rewarded with the public approval of their benevolence even before recipients express their gratitude, or are able to reciprocate (Bowditch, 2001). Hence, gift-giving is a paradox whereby the gift may start as a reduction of the giver's resources, but what is received in return in the form of adornment or heightened status appears to negate the sacrificial potency of the gift in the beginning (Bowditch, 2001; Mauss, 2002).

Secondly, Mauss warns that all gifts are essentially "silent trades" despite being a social practice that glues communities together (Boulding, 1992). Concurrently, however, giving constitutes our common life which is political yet simultaneously aesthetic, which serves as the explanation behind societal progress (Douglas in Mauss, 2002). Developments from the micro to macro levels have been grounded in the stabilizing relationship of giving, receiving and of giving in return, all of which are not free from the trading of needs involving transactions of power and influence (Douglas in Mauss, 2002). Hence, the case is no different for the arts where "the triangular relationship of artist, patron and public as an 'exchange of goods' and services provided for the ideological cohesion of a community" (Bowditch, 2001:3).

Thirdly, gifting creates a continuous pattern of future exchanges, and giving gifts of the same value would cause the exchange to be caught in a mere cycle of gifting (Boulding, 1992). Thus, gifting obliges recipients to reciprocate with gifts of a greater value, creating a momentum of incremental quality through the alternate roles of givers and recipients who are both essentially engaged in a perpetual generation of exchanges (Boulding, 1992).

Mauss' fourth principle holds that a gift carries with it a notion of forward credit through debt, through which the donor actually offers as a loan to the recipient, and for the latter to return with interest (Douglas in Mauss, 2002). Therefore, despite often being seen as a form of rescue, gifting is technically the lending of resources to those who need them in return for a higher repayment. The kindness and generosity of gifting comes with an expectation of an even larger contribution in return. Hence, recipients should be aware that they are indeed borrowing resources from their funders, and owing these debts require them to settle with a larger payback.

The fifth Maussian principle dictates that when the public is in the position of the recipients, the obligation to give more than they have earlier received would generate the subsequent succession of exchange. Accordingly, a former recipient of the gift carries the responsibility of initiating the next round of gifting. This involves the changing position from a beneficiary to a giver, which momentum spills over with the starting of a new cycle of gifting. The process underlines the need for recipients to eventually become donors, signifying the cycle and changing directions that gifting operates.

The exponential growth of crowdfunding platforms in the last decade appears to substantiate how online giving has become spaces where “silent trades” have taken place³⁶. Given that numerous theatre projects have been fully or partially funded through crowdfunding platforms since inception, Mauss’ conjecture demonstrates that the support from online communities signals their support for theatre as the ‘product’ of exchange, initiated by solicitations from theatre makers. In crowdfunding, the gifting ecosystem can be clearly illustrated from the cycle of exchange originating from funders to theatre-makers before it extends to the audience. The accumulation of small donations from private donors help fund theatre projects, and in having received these funds, theatre-makers then perform their art³⁷ to the audience³⁸ (see **DIAGRAM 1**). As returning the gift with interest also presents a similar undertone of the gift eventually being larger than what donors themselves have given (Douglas cited in Mauss, 2002), when a performance is finally staged, the enriched experience of the audience represents the ‘return with profit’ that has ensued from the raised donations.

Reflecting on Mauss’s paradoxical theory, the monetary donations from the crowd towards the productions are never the same value as the value of the gift reciprocated by the theatre-makers. For one, theatre-makers would have invested both monetary and non-monetary³⁹ investments into the project prior to the fundraising campaign. Usually, by the time campaigns are published online, most projects are half way or already near completion due to funds that theatre makers

³⁶ see *Chapter 5* for numerical data on the use *Crowdfunder* to finance theatre projects

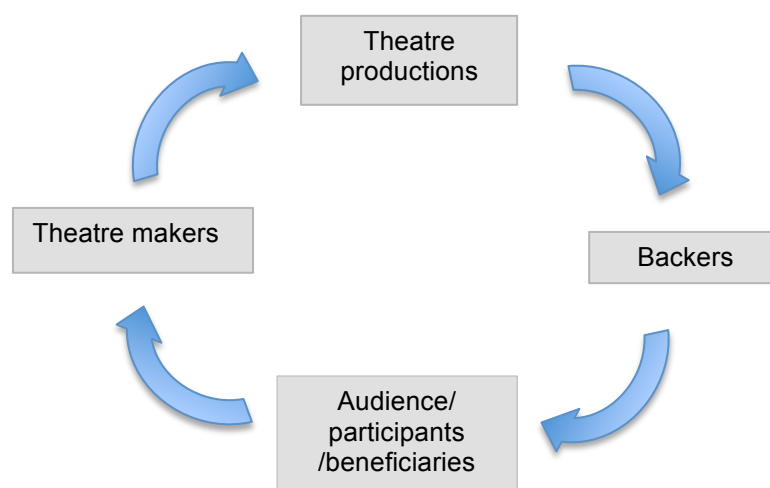
³⁷ which itself is a gift (Hyde, 1999)

³⁸ By donating even a small amount, donors are taken on board the project, which labour will be borne by members of the project. This in turn, operates as a gifting three-fold: beginning with the channeling of the monetary gift from donors to theatre makers, from which the financial support then manifests into theatrical productions to be experienced by the audience. A returning reward for the donors would eventually come full circle, albeit indirectly, with the benefits of the artistic consumption, and by being part of the theatre makers’ contribution to the field.

³⁹ such as time, energy, community participation

have earlier sought themselves. In fact, it is not uncommon for theatre makers to get access to donations from crowdfunding platforms only after a fixed campaign

DIAGRAM 1: The Maussian cycle of gifting/giving in the crowdfunding of theatre projects



duration, or reaching a specified institutional target. This means that theatre makers are often required to fork out the funds themselves, before any amount from crowdfunds could be used to reimburse, or offset parts of the production cost. Thus, the symbolic gift of the theatrical performance that is eventually staged would always cost more than the crowd's monetary donation. This higher value of the returned gift is the engine that mobilizes gifting in a perpetual cycle of giving and receiving, as theorized earlier in reciprocal exchange (Boulding, 1992). The crowdfunding model, therefore, achieves its aim when the act of asking and giving address an agreeable exchange, although it is worth noting that this is not usually an 'equal' exchange as the rewards for donating can be symbolic rather than a fair compensation⁴⁰. In such subjective value of predetermined exchanges, which can

⁴⁰ To illustrate, for their first crowdfunded project, the theatre company *TALEBEARERS* posted the following donation and reward packages: "for £5 donors will be thanked in the programme booklet and an enthusiastic high-five should they get the chance to hang out with the team", "for £25 donors will receive a sincere thank you

never be truly equal but considered as fair equivalents, the 'reward-based' model exhibits the overt exchange of monies with tokens that seals the deal between backers and theatre makers based on the option that has been agreed. Nevertheless, although the value of exchanges may not be equal, they demonstrate the 'contract' agreed between the two parties, which lubricates the process of cultural giving.

Principally, in the crowdfunding of theatre projects, the reciprocal relationship in 'donation-based' and 'reward-based', requires the understanding of a cycle of exchange that operates outwards, more as a call to participate in missions which accomplishments bring larger benefits to the public than mere completion and execution of the crowdfunded theatrical productions. Theoretically, the nature of gifting would have the audience, who are recipients of the symbolic gift of theatre performance, reciprocate later by giving back to the arts, as did the donors before them. Hence, donating based on projected project completion and accomplishments comes with good faith that theatre makers will deliver to the target audience and the incremental benefits that the project might eventually have on society. Such relationship is noticeably different from 'reward-based' backers who, for instance, have bought tickets to watch the performance themselves, and whose circle of giving concludes with their attendance and consumption of the theatrical production.

With peer donations, conversations with artists suggest that returning the generosity of fellow comrades' crowdfunding projects is based on an unwritten understanding and mutuality. Often, artists have asked and received from fellow

card and a signed headshots from all actors", "for £50 donors will receive all the above including 2 VIP tickets to their performance at the Camden Fringe", whereby, there is no direct measurement of the 'pound for pound' equivalent of the exchange.

artists, and become donors themselves when the tables have turned. However, within the grapevine of the artistic network itself, artists have been vexed by incessant donation solicitations to each other's projects. While social norms dictate that they return these kind gestures, the pressure to reciprocate has engulfed some with feelings of obligation and guilt from frequent solicitations of fellow artists when finding themselves similarly in need of funding. While in-group donations are largely exercised on the basis of alliance and reciprocity, it requires a closer inspection to learn if relationships of a parasitic nature, or those of diverse competing funders apply to the model.

Mauss' work, essentially, predicts the crowdfunding aftermath experienced by artists whose projects were funded mostly by family and friends, and how the sense of indebtedness can be crippling due to such dependency (Goodell, 1985). While artists are thankful for the funding success of their projects, the expectation to make a breakthrough, or to return the gift in ways greater than the execution of the performance itself can be a cause for anxiety (Caust, 2017; Charles and Kim, 2016). Furthermore, artists' sense of indebtedness is more commonly expressed within the confines of artistic circle than in literatures, which, has yet to officially document the psychological price that they have had to pay for 'putting themselves out there', thus, spelling out the paradox of receiving as Mauss forewarns.

2.3 Philanthropic and Charitable Giving

The field of philanthropy has largely been shaped by identifiable needs that can be met through the sourcing of wealth, and motivations that underlie the act of giving. Throughout history, philanthropy has often been equated with "upwards and onwards" idealism, when in reality, philanthropic efforts run continuously in the background, and are therefore, rarely visible or stable depending on their response

to governmental approaches to citizens's wellbeing (Andreoni, 2006:1260). The function of philanthropy as an invisible economy which strategies are both affecting and affected by government policies, has thus seen it as a saviour for welfare needs in pre-modern times, and as "the 'last resort' in periods of fiscal crises and dismantled welfare states" (Jung and Harrow, 2015; Andreoni, 1992:1259-1260). This points to the role of philanthropy in its provision for public goods and services through agreed rationalities and expectations on societal impacts achieved from the intersections, convergences, and divergences of institutional partnerships (Jung and Harrow, 2015; Andreoni, 1992:1259). Here, a key part in public finance lies in the quest for public and private institutions to co-exist in order to provide public services, particularly in configuring optimal institutional partnerships and setting the best policy for providing public goods where donors also take pride in the quality of the institutions involved (Jung and Harrow, 2015; Andreoni, 1992).

The capacity for private giving to substitute the public provision of goods and services by relying on the generosity of individuals to provide relief or support for sectors like the arts often infers that the government is relieved from the need to assume its whole responsibility (Andreoni, 2016). As such, governments have made it their interest to understand how philanthropy works and interacts with public provision to address its efficiency concerns (Andreoni, 2016). With optimal supply from philanthropic and charitable giving, the government improves its allocation of resources, with more equitable provision to its citizens (Andreoni, 2016; Jung and Harrow, 2015).

On a more balanced note, the partnership between private donors and the government justify each other's involvement in providing public goods (Andreoni, 2006: 1215; Smith et. al., 1995; Bergstorm, et al., 1986). To be fair, philanthropy

has similarly benefitted from government involvement through the provision of direct grants and subsidies to private giving that supplements, and even enhances the efficiency of charitable markets. Since philanthropy itself is a market of suppliers and demanders, it responds to changes in government policies and other factors affecting the climate of giving (Andreoni, 1992:1259; Jung and Harrow, 2015). This shows that the government's influence in encouraging private donations pervades among charities in competing for the best products and fundraising strategies which survive the market (Payton and Moody, 2008; Frumkin, 2008).

Since philanthropy refers to the social transactions of wealth from private resources or material objects for "public benefit and social change", there has been a strong link between philanthropic giving to public goods (Kidd, 1996; 2002; Sulek, 2010 in Jung and Harrow, 2015). In the western tradition, the term takes on a more specific understanding as voluntary action for the public good, where 'public goods' refer to improvement in the quality of life by attending to basic needs such as food and shelter, and/or by enhancing life with satisfying non-basic needs such as recreation, education, and self-actualization (Payton and Moody, 2008; Andreoni, 2006). The challenge for continuous giving, therefore, has incessantly been geared towards developing givers who value the outcomes of philanthropic and charitable giving through their contribution to public goods, as seen in fundraisers' preoccupation with the motivations of giving and the enhancement of funding mechanisms to maximize giving.

Given the substantial wealth that philanthropic and charitable giving garner in public finance, government's involvement in the distribution of grants and subsidies with generations of policy makers has led to considerable focus on the

determinants of giving and its impacts (Sargeant et al., 2006). Nevertheless, the conundrum over the seeming irrationality behind the motivations of giving has long confounded economists, giving shape to the evolution of the ‘pure-impure altruism’ debate over the decades. Due to the absence of exchange in unilateral transfers whereby giving is not attached to a price system and givers therefore yield no return, economists at large have become resigned to classifying gifting/giving as an economically irrational exchange (Batson, 2011; Andreoni, 1998; Zamagni, 1995; Boulding, 1992). In the long and winding dispute that has problematized the (mis)conception towards gifting’s “extremely curious exchange”, economists have maintained that all transactions are characteristically *quid pro quo* although social theorists have quite recently offered a more accurate depiction of motivations in philanthropic and charitable giving as oscillating within a spectrum between altruism and self-interest (Andreoni, 1998; Boulding, 1992).

In assessing the argument that pure altruism is logic defying, studies in fundraising have shown how economists should be analyzing gifting as impure altruism whereby donors experience a ‘warm-glow’ effect or the feel-good sensation of performing a selfless deed, in return for their generosity (Andreoni, 1998). Altruism itself is later shown to exist in a continuum rather than defined by a dichotomous distinction of ‘pure-impure’ altruism (Andreoni, 1998; Boulding, 1992), which robs the motivation for giving of its more nuanced social reality. The long dispute on the impossibility of pure altruistic behaviour as the absence of any form of return has since extended the discussion on why donations are not only given by the wealthy but also by people with average disposable income (Firth, 2012; Smith, 2012; Radley and Kennedy, 1995). Nevertheless, the earlier scepticism towards the idea of pure altruism that treated the transfer of resources with much suspicion describes the reality of *quid pro quo* that largely operates in both public and private

spheres of giving. The awarding of subsidies and grants by institutions, trusts, foundations, businesses, and even donations from philanthropists and the average donors are usually motivated by some beneficial outcomes. This was much the established equilibrium in the exchange between givers and recipients, which points to indirect returns, if not direct returns, though not necessarily formalized in the exchange (Cheal, 2016; Komter, 2005). Hence, any 'genuine' one-way giving is contested, and seen instead as a polity that may seem philanthropic at first but essentially disguises the demands for some kind of return. This can be illustrated in the need for evidence to account for given resources in order to ascertain that the public money or private investment awarded has been judiciously spent and utilised to accomplish organizational or personal goals (Selwood, 2009; Belfiore, 2004). Transparency of expenditures, quantifiable and measurable impact-quantifying effectiveness instruments are part of the more common accountability measures expected to justify the disbursement of resources from funders (Selwood, 2009; Belfiore, 2004).

Another argument against the existence of genuine philanthropic behaviour lies in the fact that donations are hardly arbitrary (Reich, 2018; Boulding, 1992). Since donations are clearly not given randomly, donors' decisions tend to lean towards human conditions they most identify with, as an extension of themselves (Reich, 2018; Boulding, 1992). Here, the theory of utility dictates that one's income serves the needs of others rather than just one's own (Boulding, 1992). However, Boulding explains that unlike taxation, which also runs on the theory of utility, the nature of philanthropic donations is voluntary rather than coercive, which suggests the superior role of intrinsic motivations in such acts.

Literatures in the field point to three identifiable models of philanthropic motivation. The first of the three models, the public goods model describes donor motivation to be driven by the desire to jointly consume public goods (Duncan, 2004). In the public goods model, giving invites an indirect shared benefit that can include the donors, though aimed more directly at the immediate recipients. Donors may be motivated by personal satisfaction unlimited by the 'warm-glow', from the satisfaction of knowing recipients' enjoyment of their gift. However, in a combination of reflexive responses that "mysteriously pass from recipient to donor", ranging from a glimmer of self-righteousness, or pity, such satisfaction can be mistakenly regarded as ennobling although these feelings feed into donors' sense of pride and vanity (Boulding, 1992:58), and the neutralizing of negative feelings such as guilt that relieve donors from blame (Duncan, 2004). However, these emotive after-effects from giving are believed to have undermined "deeper and more complex considerations" among donors (Andreoni, 2006:1264), which on the surface often manifest as symbolic reward, disguised exchange, or impure altruism (Boulding, 1992:58-60). Nonetheless, understanding why people give and their responses to giving constitutes a large part of philanthropic research that cannot escape acknowledging donors as moral beings "who enjoy and are pleased in doing what is right" (Boulding, 1992). As humans are built to be "emotional, empathic and sympathetic—enjoy gratitude and recognition, they enjoy making someone else happy, and they feel relieved from guilt" when they become givers, such moral qualms and emotional transitions suggest that people are mindful of their voluntary gifts and the gifts they receive from others (Boulding, 1992). This in turn makes it difficult to separate donors from self-interested motivations of giving even when they are morally driven to do good (Kolm, 2006; Boulding, 1992).

The purist argument in the field, however, has sustained that genuine philanthropy exists with the absence of any form of exchange and without any shape of personal gratification (Garnett, 2007; Boulding, 1992). The moral difference that separates genuine philanthropy from others lies in the absence of “the desire for self-aggrandizement or the desire to be merely fashionable”, instead of donating out of a genuine sense of community, where donors identify themselves with recipients (Boulding, 1992:61). Only the capacity to empathise, or the ability to imagine oneself in others’ shoes holds the source of the true gift for “the love of man” in donors’ realization of a common human identity with those afflicted (Sulek, 2010; Bremner, 2000; Boulding, 1992). Here also lies the thin line that separates philanthropy as an expression of goodwill towards the human race, and charity as an emphatic and altruistic response to human misfortune (Cheek et. al, 2015). Aside from this slight conceptual difference, both involve relationships between donors and recipients in the spirit of civic life and duty in providing help where governments have not succeeded (Cheek et. al, 2015). In the crowdfunding model, this describes the ‘donation-based’ model, whereby backers give without attachment or claim to any reward packages set out to entice giving. The difference between donors who claim their rewards with those who decline them stands in their decision to exercise the consumption of the rewards offered. Where donors choose to donate without consuming the rewards, or regardless of rewards, but rather for the eventual benefit from the project⁴¹, their donations are given away as public goods.

On the other hand, in the private consumption model, the exchange for the amount donated is clear since donors give to a cause, and in return, obtain a token or service they can consume. This is exemplified in the ‘reward-based’ crowdfunding

⁴¹ such as a thoroughly researched new production, a richer cultural area, or a more productive youth community

campaign pages where donors can opt to give a suggested amount of donation in exchange for the stated rewards according to pre-assigned tiers of giving. In the crowdfunding of theatre projects, reasons for giving can oscillate between “an enlightened self-interest” and the more apparent self-interested motivations (Frimer et. al., 2011; de Tocqueville, 2003) since backers can donate in exchange for material tokens⁴² as pre-packaged and displayed by the project makers on their respective campaign pages. By choosing a reward package for their sum of donation, donors contribute towards the project (which is the public good aspect of giving) but in receiving the rewards, also benefit from the private consumption of their donations.

The third model, known as impact philanthropy is more concerned with maintaining an optimal co-dependence with one recipient at a time, preferring direct donations to the individual, or the cause, rather than seeing the percentage of their donations absorbed by administrative and other indirect costs (Duncan, 2004). The rules of impact philanthropy, therefore, contrast with the two earlier philanthropic models since they are not about increasing the number of recipients per donor but on maximizing the impact of one donor’s contribution on a single recipient based on the principle that the sharing of contributions from multiple donors will reduce their charitable fulfilment of making a difference (Duncan, 2004). In the long run, this model claims to have donors contributing more than the *pareto* efficient amount (Duncan, 2004), which should be a solution to the concerns of cultural economics regarding the need to strive for optimal funding disbursements and subsidies to a public goods sector like the arts without making other sectors more impoverished (Towse, 2014; Throsby, 2010). Hence, of the three types of donor motivation models, the impact philanthropy model appears to be in a similar vein to traditional

⁴² such as posters, free tickets, and t-shirts, or experiential tokens such as a social media shout-out, a home performance package for friends and family, a personalized jingle performance

nobility patronage in its “target-gift allocation”, absence of intermediary, and direct funding from donors to the recipient. With a focus on assuring results and maximizing social good, the model pushes for ongoing commitment by individuals who care about particular issues and want to make a change in the world. As such, this model can endow artists with the freedom to explore and maximize their true potential, although it requires prolonged and sustained philanthropic giving, not afforded by the majority or involving as many recipients as previous models.

The different philanthropic models above illustrate that different aims of giving would require correspondingly different funding mechanisms that may appeal and cater to their demography of donors. Hence, in public policies, the modelling of fundraising is constantly aimed at improving the mechanisms used to increase and attract donations to public goods. In collaborative partnerships, mechanisms such as “seed grants”, “challenge grants” and “leadership gifts” have been tested and used to spur funds at different phases of a donation drive (Andreoni, 2006:1254) resulting in various match funding techniques over the years. With the involvement of institutions in crowdfunding, the platform *crowdfunder.co.uk* has been used to disburse funds according to an agreed minimum target threshold where the funds would then be matched to round up the total sum asked⁴³. Nonetheless, although supplementing a percentage of the total required funds presents applicants with another way of securing institutional funds by spreading the distribution wider to more applicants, the cost-sharing feature of match funding similarly complicates the funding distribution through its insistence on meeting the funding at a fixed percentage, which puts applicants under pressure of losing the promised funding.

⁴³ This will be explained in more detail in *Chapter 5*

2.4 Magnificence and Liberality

'Magnificence' and 'liberality' are two Aristotelian virtues concerned with the giving away of money, differentiated mainly in their scale of giving. While 'magnificence' describes the typical philanthropic giving of substantial amounts of money, usually afforded by a smaller number of people, 'liberality' pertains to the giving of small amounts of money commonly afforded by more people (Curzer, 2012). Aristotle characterizes the 'magnificent' man as a "sort of artist, a connoisseur of what is fitting and in good taste" (Althanassoulis, 2016). By definition, the only distinction between the two virtues is in the amount of giving by a single person, but because of the large gift of the 'magnificent' giver, 'magnificence' has been largely attributed to the aims of the 'eudaimon' life, or the 'good' life (Althanassoulis, 2016:781). While the average donor may afford a far more modest contribution, the massive wealth that philanthropists can give to benefit the larger society has been much revered and associated with reaching the pinnacle of life's purpose. Accordingly, the virtue in imparting with a superior amount of wealth to improve the conditions of those in need has a special value not only because such deed expresses the willingness to share one's good fortune but also because the scale of the gift has a higher capacity to make a magnanimous change.

While their scale of giving is different, the motivations for giving by 'liberal' givers are similar to the 'magnificents'. Both their concerns for the collective include the elimination of social conflicts that can diminish cooperation among people, the desire for a reasoned life in helping others live more virtuously, and the pleasantness of bonds generated through giving (Swanson, 1994: 7-8). Despite the well-regarded giving of the 'magnificents', Swanson posits that their motivations for gift-giving that is associated with the burden of safeguarding huge wealth has elevated 'liberal' gift-giving in its virtue of moderation over abundant

wealth (Athanasoulis, 2016; Cruzer, 2012). Hence, Aristotle's prescription for citizenship and participation permeating the understanding of appropriate giving is not limited to the rich but extends to a wider group of citizens that by comparison, the call for the magnanimous man to give is perhaps no different than the appeal for the common public to donate as both exemplify benevolent qualities which ultimately benefit a sharing society (Athanasoulis, 2016: 791). Nevertheless, although the relationship between donors and recipients are guided by "benevolent feelings towards others" which transpire as affection that in turn allows individuals to live together, it is far from presumed random assistance but "a targeted response to specific needs, needs which are understood within the framework of the noble and the good." (Athanasoulis, 2016: 792). This reinforces that donations in huge or small amounts within the realms of 'magnificence' and 'liberality' are given with the interest in community welfare, and the fulfilment of shared existence.

In celebrating huge and small sums of donations for the benefit of the larger purpose, the crowdfunding of theatre projects have largely attracted 'liberal' gift-givers, aligned with its philosophical leanings of accumulating funds from many people. Functionally, crowdfunding aims at attracting plural financial sources for a targeted amount, which can come in the form of accumulated small or big amounts. However, because the amount asked by theatre project founders have ranged from a moderate three to four digits funding targets, their largest contributors would not typically be considered as philanthropists in the conventional sense, but as larger than ordinary contributions, relative to the norm of small giving. Since characteristically, 'magnificence' would typically describe large, perhaps even continuous philanthropic giving by a donor, the philosophy of crowdfunding in its accumulation of smaller funds from as many donors as

possible would more likely be ascribed as an exercise of 'liberality'. Thus, the line separating 'magnificent' and 'liberal' gift giving would depend on how project founders perceive these donations in relation to their other donors⁴⁴. Although some crowdfunding campaigns have attracted mainly small donations, others have obtained a mixture of small and large donations, while few have been capable of drawing mainly large, even repeated contributions to a point that these donors are elevated to the level of micro-philanthropists.

With the virtue of fulfilling public-spirited ambitions, donations to crowdfunding campaigns usually aimed at youth, young audience, communities and participants in socially disadvantaged areas, presents an exercise in benevolence for 'magnificent' and 'liberal' givers. Although the wealth of magnificent donors of yesteryear had been spent on providing training, performing or leading a delegation to foreign festivals for drama or music, among others, financing similar activities can easily be done today by people with ordinary wealth through crowdfunding (Althanassoulis, 2016:785). In this context, crowdfunding has become a means to advocate for "events that excite the interest of the community"⁴⁵ through collective financing from the crowd as such aims are no longer exclusively attributed to the domain wealthy individuals. By inverting the philanthropic model of giving from a few people giving away a lot, to many people giving away a little, the virtue of liberality is currently being played in the role once played only by the magnificent few.

⁴⁴ This is later supported by the research findings of this thesis. The percentage of the amount raised from crowdfunding would usually inform the significance of its funding proportion to total production cost, indicating the degree of reliance seen in the three categories of theatre makers for the particular project they campaign. While both individual artists and graduate theatre companies raised between 30% and 70% of their total production cost from crowdfunding, established theatre makers raised 4% to 10%. However, because of the difference in scale, it is important to understand that an individual artist's 40% (£1500) is equivalent to an established theatre company's 4% (£1500), as seen in the relative difference in *Tabatha's* and *HS's* crowdfunding solicitation. Therefore, while the proportion of the funds raised to the total cost of production is less significant for an established theatre company which cost is proportionally bigger, it could be highly significant indeed for the individual artist whose production cost is far smaller.

⁴⁵ www.kickstarter.com

Observably, interactions on crowdfunding platforms illustrate a stark Aristotelian virtue of 'liberality' in many respects. The paradigm of benevolence where gifts are given for the benefit of others, characteristically evident of the love of a fellow human (Athanasoulis, 2016: 799), is the very foundation of successfully funded projects. The financial support that artists obtain from families, friends and fans are indicative of the Aristotelian espousal of affection for each other, with artists then returning this gift of benevolence to affected audience-communities. Within the small scale giving on crowdfunding platforms, the earlier and older paradigm of the Homeric gift-exchange where the giving of gifts plays the functional role of maintaining or raising the giver's status would be likely now that many platforms display the name of donors and projects for which they have fundraised or to which they have donated⁴⁶. Meanwhile, backers whose donations meet a particular tier of giving may choose how to be rewarded by the fundraiser⁴⁷, which distinguishes the hierarchical donor structure at play. It is clear that the approach has been adapted to encourage bigger donations by systematically appealing to not only the larger cost of exchange, but also the differentiated status that some donors qualify.

Aristotle's description of the magnificent man as a "sort of artist, a connoisseur of what is fitting and in good taste" (Athanasoulis, 2016) can also be contested with the acknowledgment of the wisdom of crowds where democratic decisions about artistic work that get funded have been shown to closely replicate the decisions of experts (Surowiecki, 2005). While this may not be representative of all successfully funded artistic endeavours, donors have demonstrated the propensity to belong among artists, or to be associated with the artists they support on crowdfunding platforms, aspiring towards the direction that is perhaps no different than the high

⁴⁶ as seen on *crowdfunder.uk*

⁴⁷ such as having their name to appear in the programme, name to be given to a character in the play, receiving a free home performance by the cast

regards that Aristotelian magnificent donors have towards grand dreams, in the past⁴⁸ (Ryu and Kim, 2016; Coleman, 2015, Scott, 2015). At a microcosm, crowdfunding platforms in the past few years have arguably resonated with the idea of 'magnificence' by giving backers the choice of revealing their name or pseudonym, affiliations, history of project backing, the amount of donations made, accessible to the public browsing through the campaign pages. Previously, backers have only revealed their names and profile pictures if they want to, while some crowdfunding platforms⁴⁹ only permit the public to see the amount of individual donations without the name or the backer's profile picture next to it. Newer crowdfunding platforms⁵⁰, however, have made the donation list more open and public with names, profile pictures, amount of donations clearly displayed, and where available and provided by backers themselves, their affiliations, support for other crowdfunding projects, and their own crowdfunding project(s) on the platform. With these developments, crowdfunding platforms are noticeably enticing donors with an added mechanism of status signalling, that reveals donors' identity and affiliation, which will be particularly useful for project makers but also for interested members of the public. Newer platforms have been found to not only display information about the project founders but also their online backers, showing their donation amount, projects they have helped crowdfunded, with details of their affiliations publicly accessible. Such interface functions to simultaneously acknowledge backers' financial contribution to projects while making the inter-relatedness among the community of backers apparent through the identification of their profession, organizational alliances, and charitable interests. Hence, instead of anonymous giving, the trend of giving on some crowdfunding platforms has seemed to be moving towards increased visibility, with

⁴⁸ for example, the building of hospitals and universities

⁴⁹ for example, *kickstarter.co.uk*

⁵⁰ for example, *crowdfunder.co.uk*

a display that allows for recognition through professional and associational camaraderie, even giving patterns⁵¹. This has been a step further than the tiered funding packages where backers' generosity can be hierarchically arranged from the types of rewards they qualify to claim. This additional interface now gives backers the choice to be contactable by anyone browsing the project campaign, as it continues to build their backing profile. While this is a strategy for crowdfunding platform providers to persuade backers to continue to give to other projects of interests and expand their network of associates in the process, their track record of giving and increased connections can also be a persuasive factor for others to reciprocate to their projects in return.

The overarching methodology of crowdfunding is clearly spelled out in liberality's two sides of gift-giving whereby the first part of the process will always be the assembly of the gift, and then of giving it away in the next (Curzer, 2012). This is no different to the raising of funds that donors wish to give way to worthwhile projects. Equally, theatre project makers assemble their art, which they will 'perform away' after receiving the funds they need to finance it. Inversely, recipients of crowdfunds are arguably 'liberal' gift-givers themselves as their acceptance of donations is conditional upon them having the project to give in return.

Ideally, 'liberal' persons are not to take lightly what is given to them and should refuse donations unless meant to benefit others (Giammusso, 2016; Curzer, 2012; Hadreas, 2002). At this juncture, Aristotle points to "the good taker" as receiving money from those who can afford to give rather than the needy, and ensuring that any contribution will benefit the recipients rather than harming them (Giammusso,

⁵¹ such as the types of projects they have donated to and how much they have given

2016; Curzer, 2012). When donors are spending on others, they are exercising liberal spending, and when project makers amass these donations for others instead of themselves, the act is in fact liberal taking (Curzer, 2012). Tapping on the 'magnificence' of the wealthy and the 'liberality' of the masses can serve societies well by bringing them together as shared humanity, and crowdfunding platform service providers have been opportunistic in summoning the two virtues to justify giving for benevolent causes while increasing participation and usage by appealing to elements of reputation as part of their operative mechanics.

2.5 Social Solidarity and Insularity

Durkheim's study on the economic evolution from pre-industrialization to early capitalism points to the purpose and connection of societies and their social embeddedness, or solidarity, which has continued to play a significant role throughout (Goffman in Jeffries, 2014). Changes in the nature of work and workforce functionality during these periods have given shape to different types of solidarity: mechanical, organic, and interest-based. With the rise of capitalism which brought with it an increased division of labour, Durkheim observed that societies have transformed from "a simple, segmented" organization of kin-based clans to "increasingly more complex, more differentiated societies functionally integrated" (Tiryakian in Alexander, 2008: 306). This meant that maximal collective thinking and minimal individuation resulting from shared sentiments and beliefs of a homogenous society, known as mechanical solidarity, has since given way to a more individualized but interdependent society (Tiryakian in Alexander, 2008: 307). The division of labour of modern occupational structure has consequently changed the social environment causing social actors to renew their values, expression of attachment and bonding with each other (Gofman, 2014). With more differentiated roles, the cohesiveness of society with similarities has evolved into the organic

solidarity of increasingly dissimilar and heterogenous society (Gofman, 2014). This formation of new forms of solidarity over time has shown solidarity as an inherently permanent element of functioning in a society, and the importance of consistent expression of support and identification of allegiance with each other despite changes in labour arrangements. It has been suggested that the familial network which defines solidarity, and the occupational network which defines organic solidarity, are likely to usher in a social solidarity that is eroding traditional boundaries of blood relations and bonds created by the utility of work execution (Tiryakian in Alexander, 2008; Gofman, 2014). The capacity for individuals to be connected to broader memberships while engaging in the observable and practical here-and-now relationships illustrates how communal relations can also be in abstraction, and not necessarily formally established whilst pointing to solidarity as a kind of consciousness that is always present. Therefore, after Durkheim's identification of organic solidarity as a rich network of social ties whereby social actors transcending kinship can freely enter and develop, Komter (2005) proposes the existence of a third category of social solidarity that is independent from previous ties and is defined instead by interests. The addition of interest-based solidarity suggests that individuals can be similarly connected to each other because of shared interests regardless of distance or proximity, presence or absence of kinship ties with each other. Social embeddedness, therefore, can cohesively bind individuals together through their shared interest, if nothing else. Nevertheless, in response to Durkheim's theory are a number of studies which have exposed the downside of solidarity. While social solidarity strengthens in-group relations, it has been shown to simultaneously restrict access to the wider community (Meyer and Hyde, 2004). In other words, the social structure that reinforces the solidarity of subgroups is also keeping away those outside the existing circles from being part of them (Meyer and Hyde, 2004). Consequently,

the tendency for strong group solidarity to view outsiders with animosity makes it easier for conflicts to transpire with other groups as it continues to define itself as a unit (Komter, 2005). In addition, the drawbacks to this may include the weighing down of innovations as groups become more confined to themselves and thus, become increasingly homogenous (Gofman, 2014). This, in turn, is likely to discourage reaching out to a wider audience who may feel that any effort by the group is designed for in-group exclusivity and not meant for all.

The paradox of solidarity lies in its ability to foster economic activity within a community whilst the same embeddedness within an informal network, functions as a powerful means to exclude newcomers (Waldinger, 1995 cited in Komter, 2001). Within the network, people profit from the promotion of cooperative behaviour brought about by mutual trust, although this may unfortunately create a condition for conformity and egalitarianism (Komter, 2001). As such, the social bond of in-group solidarity tends to discourage individualism and exclude 'individuals' from the shared characteristics, pursuits and participation of the collective (Simmel, 1900b cited in Komter, 2001: 388). Here, the parallelism of solidarity's double-edged sword and social capital's light and dark side is clear. Bonding social capital, in particular, correspondingly outlines the solidarity of close-knit networks of potentially high-resource social relations with the potential to increase in-group dependency while obstructing access to possibly richer external resources.

In the crowdfunding of theatre projects, Durkheimian "organs at work" emerge in a number of social circles. Project founders and backers have formed networks of attachment through kinship and by their shared experience and beliefs as fellow artist-entrepreneur in theatre making (mechanical solidarity), bonds formed

through mutual support for community engagement and benefits with the arts which come from backers from various fields (organic solidarity), as well as those whose connections formed through their love for theatre as an artform (interest-based solidarity). Mechanical solidarity makes most of backers among dependable family members and the circle of close friends, through default kinship by virtue of blood relations and close ties usually driven by the responsibility to support and fulfil an obligation. Similarly, a strong sense of obligation comes from the network of practitioners whose occupation identifies their togetherness. Meanwhile, organic solidarity can be identified at the basis of connections with individuals who are not related by social ties but whose different roles and positions have allowed them to value the projects significance. Support from interest-based solidarity, on the other hand, is apparent among aesthetes, fans and followers motivated by shared interests and fascination with general or specific genres of theatrical performances. Nevertheless, although in the latter the obligation is neither a filial one nor organized around occupational structures, the voluntary nature that a mutual sense to respond to a need and a common liking for an artform largely describe the next phase of evolution in social solidarity of cohesiveness achieved in abstraction, exemplified in the support from people who may not know each other personally, or even through work associations, but are digitally connected through intentions and ideas as online communities.

At this juncture, it is clear how the current model points to the return of the older form of crowdfunding being repackaged as an online version on various digital platforms, specifically as a medium to tap into the potential resources of online communities who share similar concerns and/or interests. Here is where project founders can gain access to 'friends of friends' and form possible alliances beyond the close networks of people they already know and expand relations to those

outside the circle. These new relations whose connection to project makers is merely connected through shared concerns and/or interests towards particular crowdfunding projects despite existing virtually as abstraction and brought together by the online campaign, functions economically in meeting the resources needed by project founders. Overall, in exploring the intricacies of donor-recipients' relations on crowdfunding platforms, the sociological functionalist and structuralist dimension of social solidarity as posited by Durkheim has established the necessary typologies to unravel the construction of support that contributes to the system, and equally its limiting setbacks.

The explication on the principles of gifting/giving, with close consideration of how crowdfunding operates in the financing of theatre projects has so far established the consistencies characterizing donor-recipient relationships. Together, they point to the regards for associations that gifting/giving play out for both parties, and the benefits from such alliance through which donors signify their identification with funding mediators and recipients, as simultaneously driven by concerns for the larger society and human flourishing. Intersections of the multiple tropes highlight the expectations of exchange in various forms, whether explicit or implicitly expressed by donors. Hence, to reveal 'the crowd' in crowdfunding for theatre projects calls for the elucidation of theatre makers' social capital in leveraging financial support to their cause. In resuming with the theoretical framework outlining this research, I now proceed with Social Capital Theory.

Chapter 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents my justification for analysing the research data from a social capital perspective in providing the language of analysis for cultural giving embedded within the relationship between theatre makers and their backers. It begins by adopting the definitions, and identifying critical concepts most apt in explaining the relational dimension in the mobilization of funds from theatre makers' social contacts to their theatre projects. The aim of the chapter is to outline the conceptualizations which will be utilized in examining the composition of the crowd of backers, more specifically in scrutinizing the networks of formal and informal support that drive support for theatre making from the expansion of the theory at the micro, meso, and macro levels with which to identify the actors involved into varying levels of social capital.

3.1 Social Capital Theory

The inquiry into the transactions between theatre makers and their backers inevitably calls for a theory that deals with a type of resource that is based on connections and the sociability of networks between actors. In the understanding of such exchange, social capital theory befits the tool of analysis from which the nature of relationship that leads to the financing of theatre projects can be further extrapolated. As a theoretical concept that overlaps sociological disciplinary perspectives with economic traditions (King et. al., 2019: 901), the application of social capital in tracing the flow of individual assets to a group level phenomenon acknowledges its implication at the macro economic level, and vice versa (Chalupnick, 2010; Piazza-Georgi, 2002) due to their high inter-relatedness (Halpern, 2005 in Claridge, 2020). With this understanding, I grouped the backers found in the research according to different levels of social capital as signified by

their familial, friendship, communal and institutional ties to the theatre makers. In doing so, I found my categorization to reside in between two micro-meso-macro perspectives of social capital scholars. With a sole focus on social relationships, the levels adopted by the first group stretch the relations between individuals to relations between groups, and lastly, to relations between regions or nations (Halpern, 2005; Yasunobu and Bhandari, 2009 in Claridge, 2020). Meanwhile, with a focus on factors, the levels adopted by the second group of scholars range from the embeddedness in social relationships to the context of social grouping, and finally, the wider application to community or society (Claridge, 2018; 2020). Weighing the accuracy of categorizations of both perspectives, I have chosen not to align exclusively with one or the other but to let the research data fit organically into the relations between individuals (at micro level), social groupings (at meso level), and institutional or national (at macro level) which will also benefit from the factors' perspective when considering the relational embeddedness, context, and application up to the communal scale. Further inquiry into these specific social groupings directed the research into existing separate groupings but parallel networks, which helped capture the nature of giving and motivation for support as defined by their relationship to the fundraiser. This typology is later corroborated with corresponding segments in Claridge's (2018, 2020) levels of social capital, which have been comprehensively developed from a systematic epistemology of a broad collective of scholars in network studies. However, as mentioned, my social grouping is the result of empirical categorization induced from the helper network in the research data resulting in the given types and hierarchies of social capital networks, which I will elaborate in sub-section 3.3.3.

Contemporary scholars of social capital divide between two camps: those who consider the economics aspects of social capital, and those who steer away from

it. A research on crowd-based donations would entail that I take the economic definition of social capital and its propensity for action in the crowdfunding process (Claridge, 2018; Julien, 2015; Fulkerson and Thompson, 2008). Due to the capital convertibility of collective financial asset (EC), which is mediated to theatre makers through a digital social space (SC) with potential reputational outcome (SymC) that could contribute towards organizational status (CC), the research adopts “a connectionist approach” (EC→SC→SymC→CC). Rationalizing this requires identifying the relationship between theatre makers and their backers from the network perspectives of bonding, bridging, and brokerage (Lee, 2017: 112). Moreover, since donations to projects originating from the sociability and normative interactions in relational properties potentially extend beyond close relations to form civic norms, generalised trust and shared understanding at the wider societal plane calls for the analysis to include economic and metaphorical productivities, alongside the benefits associated with both.

In positioning the research within the theoretical framework I break down the umbrella term social capital into practical definitions that pertain to my research focus. ‘Capital’ refers to durable resources that produce wealth, technically “the accumulated wealth of an individual, company, or community, used as a fund for carrying on fresh production” (Godfrey 2014:15). It embodies the notion of “wealth in any form used to perpetuate wealth”, that may be presented in the capacity to perform work, create value and utility, with the ability to regenerate itself for future use with continuous maintenance (Godfrey 2014:15). The definitions for ‘social capital’, more specifically, cut across twenty varieties across disciplines and range from the abstract to the practical (Adler and Kwon, 2002). In a more abstract definition, social capital is expressed as “an individual’s personal network of elite institutional affiliations”, while its more practical definition can be described as “a

web of social relationships that influence individual behaviour and thereby, affects economic growth” (Adler and Kwon: 2002). Godfrey (2014:65) simplifies social capital as “what you can get by virtue of whom you know” while extensively describing it as “the sum total of resources available to individuals by virtue of the strength of relationships between them and other social units, whom an individual has relationships with”. Both definitions provide a useful spectrum within which the notion of social capital can oscillate, and be used for the purpose of this research. Here, increasingly marked criticisms of the theory’s elitist standing can already be traced in its pronounced attentiveness on individuals with inherent vertical connections in their potential dominance of resources that they can access more easily from their stock of Social Capital which allows them, in due course, to reproduce more wealth (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Godfrey, 2014).

The explication of social capital has similarly been concerned with the strength in ties formed in relationships, and how they are sustained over time to allow people to achieve more with less difficulty by working together than if they were to do it alone (Field, 2008). Through a series of relational networks, engagement with a wider group increases the circle of contacts that in turn increases the potential for a shared common outlook which accumulation and richness of ties is a powerful currency to have. Here, Field (2008:3) iterates that “people’s networks count, who one knows count” and goes further to elaborate that who individuals know would partly define them. Within networks, individuals are placed in a wider set of relationships and norms that allow them to pursue their goals through bonds that can serve as the centre of a larger social edifice (Field, 2008:3,13). Nevertheless, while memberships in networks can allow for the opportunities to be realized from the binding of shared values, such connections that operate on the basis of

obligations to others usually require a return of these obligations, which makes reciprocity part and parcel of Social Capital.

In line with this is the theory of structuration which proposes that structure is always both enabling and constraining in virtue, highlighting that the relation between structure and agency is inherently wrought with opportunities and tensions, simultaneously (Giddens, 1984:169). In fact, the assertion that claims to resources may liberate but also constrain individuals by the very connections they have in their network, points to the liability of social relations, which tends to be overlooked considering the broader associations of social capital as an asset or currency (Field, 2008:3; Bourdieu, 1984). In recognizing the liberating and constraining aspects of social relations, structuration also makes visible the links between the micro level of individual experiences of everyday activity with the meso level of community support, and the macro levels of institutional policies which together, account for a critical realistic epistemology organically formed in networks of cultural giving. For this reason, this thesis links the positionality of theatre makers with the respective levels of social capital they attract. Prior to this, the chapter will first underline the contributions of seminal scholars of social capital whose variant conceptualizations of the theory present a convergence in their applicability to the research (Asquith, 2019).

In analysing the research data, I employ Bourdieu's conceptualization of *cultural reproduction*, *the primacy of social capital* over other forms of capital, and *capital convertibility*. While Bourdieu provides an understanding of social capital inequality and its permeable currency, Coleman shows how the *density of ties* function on social norms (building up from Granovetter's *strength of weak ties* and Burt's *structural holes*). Complementarily, Putnam's conceptualization of *bonding*,

bridging and *linking social capital* demonstrates the varying network structures operating in different relational ties. Together, the nuances in their conceptualizations of the theory offer aspects through which to explore this research.

3.2 Social Capital Conceptualizations of Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam

With the theoretical evolution from socio-economic paradigms, the development of the theory in more recent decades has given way to closer inspection of social capital to extend into cultural capital, a form which Bourdieu establishes to explain how cultural judgment of a dominant group is presented as universal and selectively endowed, hence, allowing for its legitimate domination (Christoforou and Davis, 2014; Field, 2004). Bourdieu highlights the use of capital to signal the intention to draw out different resources of power, and links his analysis to economics through the proliferation of wealth unlimited to realist forms stored in quantities of money, language, cultural knowledge and credentials but also in metaphorical forms as exemplified by power and social advantage (Field, 2008; Halpern, 2004) This claim has since expanded previous understanding of social capital to deliberate on and consider the significance of embodied features inherent in individuals.

Bourdieu's contemplation on the position of social capital has dramatically shifted over time. In *Forms of Capital* (1977) Bourdieu moves the position of social capital from a distant third after economic and cultural capitals to a unitary capital that "presents itself in three fundamental guises" (Bourdieu 1977:47). He asserts that the inter-relation of capitals allows them to transform themselves into each other to maximize accumulation. In a following work, *Distinction* (1984), forms of capital are presented as real entities rather than metaphorical: "the overall volume of capital,

understood as the set of actually useable resources and powers – economic capital, cultural capital and also social capital” (Bourdieu, 1984:114). With later works, social capital increasingly appears alongside economic, cultural and symbolic capitals as principal fields which the combination of which constitute the social position of a person (Bourdieu, 1991, 1988). In a later revision, Bourdieu has refined his position on social capital as rooted to economic capital and an adjunct to cultural capital, as an accumulation of labour that is invested over a long period:

“the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”

(Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:119)

While Bourdieu’s conceptualization of social capital has been dynamic and fluctuating, he consistently points to the characteristics of social capital as possibly all-encompassing, permeable, parallel to, and yet deeply rooted in other forms of capital.

Bourdieu (1991) theorizes that in practice, various forms of capital are built, used and converted mutually with each other, such that a non-economic purpose (altruistic) can be converted to an economic purpose (self-interest) or become simultaneously enmeshed (Svendsen and Svendsen, 2016:10). Not only that, all forms of capital in tangible or intangible forms, are convertible into economic capital at certain transactional cost (Svendsen and Svendsen, 2016:11; Christoforou and Davis, 2016). Therefore, capitals can act as credentials, guaranteeing trustworthiness of its possessors that consistently increase their symbolic capital (Svendsen and Svendsen, 2016:12-13). By giving sociological attention to intangible capital, Bourdieu calls for the recognition of the acquired

immaterial forms of capital to be utilized for economic profit and its enabling force (Field, 2017; Svendsen and Svendsen, 2016:13).

In intertwining the capitals, Bourdieu's conceptualizations have been criticized for the lack of explicitness and isolated treatment of each capital (Grossman, 2013), while his concentration on class has raised consideration for other demographic factors at work such as gender and race (Campbell 2000; Maloney et al. 2000 in Grossman, 2013), as well as other contextual variables (Aquilera, 2002; Briggs, 1998; Gittell and Videl, 1998; Goulbourne and Solomos, 2003; Norris and Inglehart, 2006 in Grossman 2015) which he did not take into account. Additionally, Bourdieu's seeming acceptance of a privileged/an underprivileged dichotomy has been equally criticized for merely acknowledging "the role of agential reflection in social life" rather than seeking change in those structures and facilitating individuals to act upon their realities of inequality (Telling, 2016).

Meanwhile, Coleman highlights the *density of ties*, *primordial domain* and *generalised trust* with the general proposition that social capital and human capital are often complementary (Coleman 1994:304, cited in Schuller et al. 2000:7). From the educational context of his study, Coleman refines social capital as "the set of resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organization and that are useful for the cognitive or social development of a child or young person" (Coleman 1994:300) after which, a clearer causal link for access to resources further concedes that "the powerful remained powerful by virtue of their contacts with other powerful people" (Schuller et al, 2000:6), relatively echoing Bourdieu's position. Coleman's further refinement of the concept leads to it being located within a neo-functionalist context where social relations comprise

of useful capital resources for actors. Access to these resources requires that a number of processes take place beginning with the forming of obligations, expectations and trustworthiness, thereby creating channels for information that efficiently support the setting of norms (Coleman 1988a: 103-4, cited in Schuller et. al. 2000:6).

According to Coleman, resources endowed by social capital may take the shape of “general level of trustworthiness” where obligations are to be repaid based on the actual needs of the person who has asked for help (Field, 2008; Coleman 1994). This means assessing factors like the existence of other sources of aid, the degree of affluence which reduces the amount of aid needed from others, the cultural practices of lending and asking for aid, the degree of dense social networks and the logistics of social contracts, among others (Coleman, 1994:306). While for Coleman, capital is not completely fungible or mutually interchangeable, its specific activities should be valuable in facilitating certain useful actions (Coleman, 1994: 302). In contrast to Bourdieu, Coleman extends the scope of social capital to encompass social relationships of non-elite groups instead of limiting it to describe the reproduction of privilege by contacts within elite groups (Field, 2008; Coleman, 1994).

Nevertheless, although Coleman’s seminal version of social capital theory has acquired an eminent place in sociological imagination and policy discourses, it has been criticized for its questionable premises which are implicated with the causal mediation of “irreconcilable tensions, logical problems with ideological implications, conceptual bluriness, silences around structures of inequality” (Tlili and Obsiye, 2014; Portes, 2000). These include the premise of Coleman’s social capital that is based on a mix of communitarian, culturalist and familial axioms within a normative

vision for suburban milieus featuring a constitutive marker of bounded territory excluded from stratifying variables of class, race or gender (Tlili and Obsiye, 2014). Thus, Coleman's social capital has been accused of territorialism whose "functionalist pedigree, renders causal factors of inequalities in goal attainment", irrelevant (Tlili and Obsiye, 2014). By omitting the operation and organization of power in social relationships, Coleman's formulation fails to observe situations faced by communities lacking in social capital (Tlili and Obsiye, 2014). The outcome of these criticisms draws the distinction between the social capital 'haves' and 'have nots', specifically, those with a stock of social capital against those with a social capital deficit. While Bourdieu (1996) acknowledges the attribution of negative symbolic capital capable of stigmatizing and disrupting the "primary site of the accumulation and transmission of different forms of capital", Coleman generally seems to have excluded the reality of anxieties facing some family units (Edwards, et.al., 2003; Bauman, 1998). This conscious separation has since opened up avenues for social capital to be understood within the realities of inequality and discrimination, which Coleman's "idyllic vision of harmoniously organically integrated communal life" did not include (Tlili and Obsiye, 2014). Moreover, due to his focus on those endowed with social capital, Coleman has more recently been associated with support for neoliberal forms of governance (Fine, 2010; Coole, 2009), and from this, the concern for diminishing state provision for public services.

Putnam's take on social capital brings attention to its triadic features, instrumental role in communitarianism, revelation of its dark side, and operative mechanism in reciprocity. With a 'networks-norms-trust' triad dominating the conception of his theory, Putnam's focus on participatory activities as the heart of civic life has paved the way for social capital to enter mainstream political discourse (Schuller et al., 2000; Baron et. al., 2000), in particular, for functioning as the metaphorical

'glue' or 'grease' that enable participants to act together more effectively in pursuit of shared objectives (Putnam 1996:56, cited in Schuller et al., 2000:9). This instrumental role of social capital in communitarianism, which emphasizes on individual responsibility to the community, highlights its functional role much like Coleman's, although focus on the functional role of the individual resides mostly with Putnam in later years when Coleman rejects such instrumentalism with claims for an intrinsic and universal link between social capital and egalitarian policies (Schuller 2000:10). Putnam's conceptualization of social capital is therefore seen as complementary to egalitarian practices instead of correlations between the levels of social capital and the measures of inequality, which eventually gave rise to the tensions and trade-offs between 'bonding' and 'bridging' forms of social capital (Putnam, 2000 cited in Schuller, 2000:10). Later, by filtering out normative assumptions, Putnam begins to acknowledge the negative effects of social capital both internally (to network members) and externally (to society at large), hence, bringing the previously ignored dark side of social capital to the fore (Schuller et. al., 2000:11). Putnam's other contribution lies in the shift of emphasis from trust to reciprocity. He posits that social trust easily generates either "virtuous circles" or "vicious spirals" from the expectations of one's trustworthiness towards others, thus, influencing behaviour (Schuller et. al., 2000:11). These continuous generations of positive or negative reinforcements are identified as the norms of generalized reciprocity, a return action based on a formerly received action that largely characterizes social capital (Schuller et. al., 2000:11).

Criticisms of Putnam's version of the theory have been overwhelming despite its popularity. Specifically, Putnam's explication of the roots of social capital as an outcome of civic engagement has been deemed to lack the inclusion of other contributing roles such as religious denominations, economic development and

prosperity, collective experience of the community, state policies and legal frameworks, restrictions or lack of government financial support, hence, his narrow conceptualization is felt to inadequately capture social capital (Kedir, 2020). Rather than being the basis of democracy, social capital has been countered to be the outcome of democracy instead, thwarting Putnam's proposition on the causal link of social capital and democracy (Kedir, 2020). The main ingredient of social capital, trust, has been rectified to only flourish under the circumstances where democracy has been persistent, justice has been consolidated, and where there is enforcement of the rule of law (Kedir, 2020). Nonetheless, with the criticism on Putnam, comes the realization that social capital theory has been studied as an "elite endeavour" yet again, as well as behaviours, practices and politics that structurally limits the comprehension at grassroots level (Kedir, 2020). Following this awareness, there has been a shift of interest more recently in the role of social capital affecting low-income areas and developments of community activities based on their subjective needs (Gittel and Videl, 1998).

While documenting the connection between organizational membership and governmental quality, Putnam has de-emphasized the causes of social capital (Halpern, 2004). In particular, Putnam has been criticised for overlooking the derivation of social capital from individuals, when it is the aggregation of this variable within the norms and networks of a particular community that forms the social capital at community level (Putzel, 1997). Without the understanding at the individual level while only being interested in what leads to the formation of social capital at community level, Putnam is missing out on the prerequisite of community social capital formation (Gleaser, 1999; Putzel, 1997). By undermining the process of aggregation, Putnam's conceptualization of social capital tends to look at a wholesale plural (Gleaser, 1999) while ignoring the complementarities across

individuals as social multipliers capable of igniting large changes from small fundamental changes through aggregate behaviour (Becker and Murphy, 2001; (Gleaser, 1999). This has brought attention to government intervention in social capital investment where the stock of social capital is low, and the need to provide “multiple equilibria” for different areas where heterogeneity may consequently lead to discrimination due to the lack of interest in social contact between individuals different from themselves, which hinders coordination at the community level (Glaeser, 1999). Furthermore, the corpus of Putnam’s work on social capital and democratization suffers from a combination of inconsistency and conceptual stretching and an overly ambitious drive of identifying a single explanatory framework to account for the entire gamut of political and economic performance to become “the latest elixir” and “all things to all people” in the discussion of development (Putzel, 1997). This has caused it to fall into the reductionism of path dependence, which eclipses the role of political organization and action in political outcomes (North, 1981).

Like Coleman, Putnam’s work has also been criticised for its pandering to “a nostalgia for a somewhat imaginary democratic golden age” that appears to idealize the family and associations of a conservative America when in other countries, growths underpinning social capital have been favourable to capitalism but not necessarily to democracy (Rodan, 1993 cited in Putzel 1997:941). Thus, Putnam’s view on the resource of social capital accruing to entire political communities as an emergent property of society as a whole, is seen as intrinsically for the public good and not a by-product of social and economic activities, thereby, creating a profound confusion between the mechanics of trust (network operations and norms) and the political content transmitted through embodied networks and norms (Putzel, 1997:941). As communities become closer and more insular, they

further exclude others from engaging rather than developing democracy, creating “close-knit ethnic enclaves” capable of forming breeding grounds for “intolerance and openness” that disproportionately generate benefits for a few beneficiaries while they destroy that of others (Ostrom, 2000; Putzel, 1997:944). Here, Putnam’s conflation of social capital with the manifestation of associational membership as civic community, and his idealization of all that is good in democracy both ignore the point that political equality confers individuals with equal rights and not the obligation to help others (Putzel, 1997; Ostrom 1990). Moreover, Putnam is criticised for being wrapped in nostalgia for his tendency to idealize the family as the most productive site of social capital, when the bonds of both extended and nuclear families have loosened (Putzel, 1997:946; Putnam, 1995:73). To this, Fukuyama (1995:4-5) identifies the development of social decapitalization as being misplaced on the family unit, which is often seen as the primary instrument of socialization and centre of the transmission of “culture, values, knowledge of the society across generations” despite families being highly hierarchical, and one of the most potent sites of patriarchal relations (Putzel, 1997: 946), responsible for transmitting chauvinism and racism across generations (Fukuyama, 1995; Putzel, 1997). Hence, critics of Putnam have insisted that the pursuit of change is placed on concerted action of the state rather than upon the consensus of communities where intimate familial units reside (Putzel, 1997).

On the whole, proponents of social capital have been criticized for their lack of consideration for the grimmer aspects of the theory. Concerns have been raised on the excluded exploration into its darker side due to the tendency to focus on the theory’s ‘brighter manifestations’ (Gargiulo and Benassi, 1999; Villalonga-Olives and Kawachi, 2017; Gannon and Roberts, 2020), thus, the disinclination to acknowledge the difficulties in facilitating the sharing of resources due to actors’

centrality, or distance to resources (Gullen et. al., 2005). Being closer to resources, privileged capital-seekers inherently command larger access to social capital which is eased by their capacity to influence, and therefore, the ability to command a higher level of trust and cooperation while capital-seekers who are more distant from resources become easily disadvantaged by the limits of trust and cooperation available to them (Gannon and Roberts, 2020; Alves and Edvardsson, 2019). Besides the likelihood of resource monopoly by individuals with existing higher social capital to increase the “divide between stock and scarcity of social capital”, the situation also points to the issue of multidimensionality in a highly stratified society. Capital-seekers affected by their specific circumstances, face implications of intersecting circumstances that would further reduce the possibility of functional social capital (Alves and Edvardsson, 2019), hence, those with lower social standing would find their restricted access to resources compounded by interrelated shortcomings brought on by their status.

Additionally, suspicions of social capital theory have included its exclusion of aspects of sanctions among social relations other than the assumptions of normative and idealistic response to capital-seeking (Christoforous, 2013; Alves and Edvardsson, 2019). This includes its inability to capture and examine the links between human agency and institutional backing, and the induction of social values through a shared identity, which help sustain social welfare (Gullen et. al., 2005: 900). Fine’s (2002) rejection of Social Capital Theory for being ahistorical and apolitical, however, presents the opportunity to draw attention to the study of social capital within various historical and political contexts, part of which is to be explored in this research. With a focus on fundraising from the plurality of network relations sources, this research will benefit from the role of social capital in enhancing “collaborative advantage, through actors improving their capacity to

integrate, adapt and mobilize resources”, a feature known as maximization of density that assists in the process of “value co-creation” (Alves and Edvardsson, 2019: 34), and how the capacity to achieve such is “dependent on actor’s set of collaborative processes, absorptive, adaptive, resource-integration competencies and learning capacity” (Lusch and Vargo, 2014).

3.3 Levels of Social Capital

Exploring the financial support in the crowdfunding of theatre projects makes it necessary to examine the individual layers of social relationships that enable the facilitation of resource mobilization, contribution to the complementarity and substitution between different segments of funders, the presence or lack of coordination and the cooperation involved in theatre makers’ formation of their capital portfolio (Collins, 2013; Kim and Aldrich, 2005). This entails consideration for the varied combinations and sources of funds from each group type in an interlinked micro-meso-macro context whilst acknowledging the internal workings of each category as reflected in their inherent values, and essentially how individual fundraisers integrate informal private support with formal institutional support to organize collective action towards the making of theatre as a shared cultural endeavour.

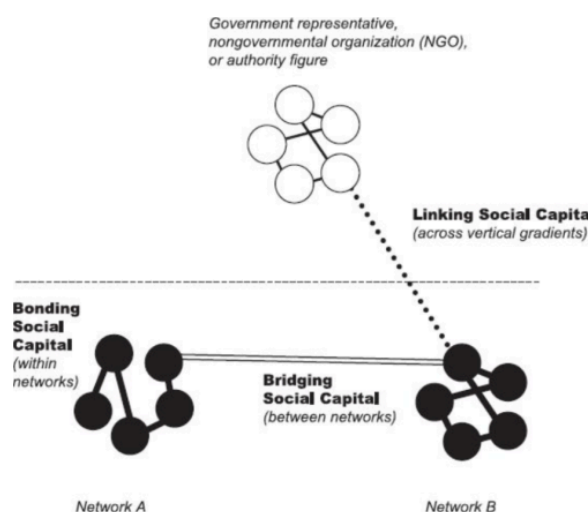
While these operating layers vary in richness and complexity, as mentioned, the parameters set by the context of this research spread them across the individual to the state; identifiable by the levels of social capital of family, friends, community and institutional networks. With the individual at the focal point of these relations, social network ties branch outwards from this centre and may expand in varying compositions of bonding, bridging and linking structural dimensions. Properties attached to bonding, bridging and linking ties can be further scrutinized to reveal

their relational and cognitive dimensions. On a relational dimension, these ties are assessed through the thickness of trust and trustworthiness, conformity to norms and sanctions, response to obligations and expectations, identity and the identification with others, all of which are exemplified in acts of goodwill and reputation recognition (Claridge, 2020: 2). Meanwhile, on a cognitive dimension, the three ties operate on shared understanding in various systems of meanings encompassing language, codes, narratives, values, attitudes, beliefs, goals and purpose; sufficiently based on generalized trust, a quality often seen in cultural belonging and conventions (Claridge, 2020:2). Additionally, at a network dimension, horizontal relations are typified by connections with individuals of similar standing or position while vertical relations are typified by connections with individuals in superior or more powerful positions (Lin, 2001). Networks can also contain a mixed of horizontal and vertical relations where connections are formed both with other individuals of the same standing and those in superior position (Lin, 2001). Where social relations mainly attract those like them, thus, generating a homogenous network ties, they risk becoming increasingly insular whereas heterogenous network ties are more desirable to merge resources and encourage broader engagement (Lin, 2001). These varying dimensions carry different functions, project different roles, and ultimately promote different trajectories in the outcomes of social capital (see **DIAGRAM 2**).

In a continuum, the micro level is generally descriptive of a bonding social capital as demonstrated by individuals' relationship with people closest to them by kin and friendship network. Beyond existing friends, when individuals form new relations, the network structure decreases in density from a close-knit bonding social capital to a thinner but wider scope of bridging social capital relations. Beyond this secondary layer of relations are individuals who are connected through ties less

personal and more distant but are linked usually through a broader spatial, role, and collective connection at the community, association or organization level. Further onwards, as the network enters a communal realm, relationships tend to bridge people beyond the personal and work connections, onto a broader societal, shared sense of belonging, identity or purpose.

DIAGRAM 2: Bonding, bridging and linking social capital



(Taken from <https://irevolutions.org/tag/capital>)

At the meso level, network structures tend to consist of bridging and brokerage social capital, exemplified by communal, organizational and institutional links achieved through the connection of shared philosophies and goals. Social capital at the macro level operates beyond these and resides in the broader ecology, both affecting and affected by activities at the micro and meso levels.

Across all micro, meso and macro levels, while bridging social capital takes place when an actor is connected to another previously unknown actor, linking social capital occurs when a relationship with a middle person, brings on board a previously unconnected whole new network. The brokerage brought by this single

connection is particularly valuable if the demographic is a richly heterogeneous one, consisting both horizontal and vertical power relations, where a diverse collective mixes complementarily with actors with higher access to resources; in other words, where there is a favourable combination of bottom-up and top-down connections that can maximize support for the entrepreneur in need of resources.

The micro, meso and macro levels of social capital examined in relation to this research will be explained in more detail below, beginning with the social relations closest to the focal actor: the family. As a caveat, due to the dominance of entrepreneurship literatures on resource mobilization, reference to fund-seeking entrepreneurs in the explanation below are used with the fundraisers of crowdfunding projects in mind, specifically, the theatre makers in this research.

3.3.1 Family Capital

Next to personal resources (such as savings, income, assets), the source of start-up financing of low-wealth entrepreneurs is usually sought from family members. Families are individuals' strong ties and therefore, marked for their dependability, density and ubiquity. Financial resources drawn from familial ties, despite their particular ubiquity in family business, has remained a scarcely researched topic until interests surfaced in entrepreneurship creation in early 2000s, considering the kinship perspective and its dynamics, worthy of serious academic attention, through analysis of social interactions and cultural meanings and the many ways kinship has given shape to the entrepreneurial environment (Watson, 2013 in Verver and Koning, 2018:631-632). As the most important social institution in the formation of identity, livelihood, and career, kinship is undeniably crucial in understanding the social and cultural milieu of entrepreneurs (Kim and Aldrich, 2015; Verver and Koning, 2018:632).

Studies on family capital have weighed heavily on the connections of affluent families and the economic capital they possess in understanding family economics (Sorensen and Bierman, 2009), legacies (Jaskiewicz et. al., 2015), family investment (Wilson, 2012), family business (Hoffman, et. al., 2006); generational wealth management (Curtis, 2016), family firms (Danes, et. al., 2009) and interdependence with community (Bubolz, 2001) which points to the long established role of the family as capital providers. The extension in the definition of kinship to include blood ties as well as relationships formed through marriage, later formed new directions in kinship studies which acknowledge a wider set of ties unlimited to genealogical relations (Carsten, 2000). Its earlier reference to “formally recognized forms of kinship” currently includes less obvious and informal forms, which operate through what is considered the kinship logic (Peredo, 2003 in Verver and Koning, 2018:633). In a more encompassing definition, kinship is seen as an overarching domain where the family and ethnicity are subsets, hence, referred to “as interpersonal ties grounded in ‘relatedness’ that extends from “blood-and marriage-based ties within and beyond the household to broader ties of assumed shared ancestry, descent, and (ethnic) identity” (Carsten, 2000:1, Stewart, 2014). Within the family subset, there are the nuclear family, extended family, distant relatives, which “inhere different levels of relatedness” and where “different types of reciprocity and trust” reside, and are therefore, differently utilized in entrepreneurship (Verver and Koning, 2018:632). Thus, family social capital carries a status of resource that is “appropriable for a variety of uses” (Hoffman et. al., 2006; Pearson et al., 2008) with its importance to the success of the family and the family firm (Sorenson et al., 2009:242) attributable to a moral resource (Putnam, 1993). With this moral infrastructure, the social capital established within kinship relations fortifies beliefs and ethical norms that translate into obligations and expectations. In turn, reputation surfaces from these consistent transactions,

and speaks of a family unit's extractable social support (Sorenson et.al, 2009: 242). Hence, family social capital, where available, can be an extremely valuable asset. Families with positive network relationships tend to benefit from an extension of security from a broader base of social support (such as the community). Strong social network among family members can lead to not only financial support, but also extra help, expertise and encouragement. Where their relationship with the community is strong, families can help draw from the latter "helpful contacts, favourable public opinion" and even financial resources (Hoffman et al., 2006; Pearson et al., 2008).

Nevertheless, although relatives are a popular source of financial support among lower wealth entrepreneurs, obtaining "love money" can be inherently limiting (Wong and Ho, 2007). For the partial resources obtained for start-up purposes, its dependency may prevent entrepreneurs from obtaining additional financing or gaining access to formal top-down support required for a venture to grow. Meanwhile, for those passing the start-up stage, reliance on "love money" may prevent them from further growth and development, stunting entrepreneurial progress. Similarly, there have been warnings against the influence of emotional decision-making by close, personal ties, in addition to being placed within a circle of intra-community's limited access to information or resources necessary for a business to advance (Casey, 2014: 372).

3.3.2 Friendship Network

Friends fall under Stewart's (2010) broader variety of "kin-like" ties, which share the embeddedness of kinship-specific norms and values, equally able to aid or impede entrepreneurial progress. The wider spectrum of relations which Stewart proposes, paves the way to explore other personalized, informal norms and values

that are not limited to families but also to family-like relations which practise the amoral logic of the market rather than the rational decision making of formal business exchange (Stewart, 2003:285 in Verver and Koning, 2018:633).

Friends are entrepreneurs' dense intra-group networks which possess group norms and facilitate common goals through a heterogeneity that despite its accessibility and strength in connection, can work both ways to invite positive and negative social capital outcomes (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2000). As entrepreneur's personal social networks that are considered the most significant resource to a company, capable of connecting like and unlike ties, friendship social capital potentially leads to a whole host of new opportunities, which are otherwise difficult at an individual level (Johannisson, 1990; Casey, 2014:371,377). The social capital asset for the dense ties among friends lies in the goodwill and trust that can be tapped and is particularly useful in gaining intensive forms of engagement (Diani and McAdam, 2003 in Muso and Weare, 2017:2526). However, the density of the intra-group is itself a disadvantage when it does not attract new, valuable connections that create room for heterogeneity in an all-familiar network. Without the disruption to homogenous connections, the growth of an entrepreneurial venture is inhibited by stunted access to greater opportunities. As an "extra-family relationship", "friendship similarly mimics the ties and transactions within the family" (Iyer, 2005: 247 in Verver and Koning, 2018: 633) within what is arguably a narrow spectrum which limits entrepreneurial growth much like the limitations set by family social capital. Hence, while homogeneity can overcome information barriers or asymmetries, a greater outcome of social capital is only achieved when friendship networks are successfully extended to other individuals with a larger range of social resources and connections, superior in aspects not possessed by the entrepreneur and their existing ties such as those

with a higher level of education, career, experience, authority and prestige (Casey, 2014:377). From a resource perspective, friends have the ability to lead entrepreneurs to weak ties who are individuals they could and would not have known otherwise; whose support is capable of freeing them from associations with love money and what is potentially partial validation accrued from attachments (such as loyalty and empathy) through friendship.

3.3.3 Community Capital

In comparison to the social capital offered by family and friends, the community is a broader and larger scale of demography whose pool of resources entrepreneurs can tap into. Community social capital is found in relationships with actors outside the personal realm of individuals, outside kinship, kin-like or intra-group networks, and hence, represents entrepreneurs' weak ties. Furthermore, community ties represent an inter-group network that can be, and often is, geographically connected with ties that connect individuals to a locality or sense of place, and often, shared goals. Due to its larger size of network, it is therefore less dense than the friendship network with a tendency to be less homogeneous, consisting of both vertical and horizontal network structures in its demography. A positive community social capital outcome would result in democratic participation through the engagement with a variety of its members consisting of stakeholders, who, among others are residents, business owners and members of local organisations (Muso and Weare, 2017: 2526).

Community social capital is especially a low wealth entrepreneur's lifeline to social resources. When family and friendship-based social capital are neither possible nor lacking, securing community social capital can be a step towards overcoming challenges of accessing institutional support and formal financial resources

(Casey, 2014:368). In fact, deprived of community support, low wealth entrepreneurs may continue to face structural barriers to institutional support that more established entrepreneurs are able to navigate more easily. Thus, the role of community social capital as a mechanism that works in the space between bottom-up kinship social capital and top-down institutional social capital is key to facilitating economic action for the nascent entrepreneur to survive in a competitive industry (Casey, 2014:368).

Stepping beyond the family and friendship networks, entrepreneurs have emphasized the value of meeting with strangers and developing the thin trust of the generalized 'Other' in welcoming novel knowledge, and therefore, potentially new opportunities (Putnam 2000:136 in Lee 2011:191). The pursuit of serendipitous and fleeting relations, though it may be sparked by a casual coffee shop conversation, often sets the climate for economic-base trust or even competent economic exchanges (Hite 2005; Smith and Lohrke 2008 in Lee, 2011:198). Furthermore, investing in relations with diverse 'Other identities' (Feldman and Zoller, 2012:25) has the ability to create room for unexpected business referrals, with positive outcomes when they chance upon those occupying privileged network positions (Seever et.al., 2010).

In comparison to the previous types of social capital, positive community social capital has the lead-in capacity to access top-down public and private financial support for entrepreneurs due to its strategic position of informational advantage when socializing with key actors who are able to broker the structural holes in the entrepreneur's disconnected network of relations (Casey, 2014:367). With access to novel information in the community, entrepreneurs become more able to negotiate with top-down authorities from "a position of advantage" (Burt, 2000,

2009 in Muso and Weare, 2017:2527-2528). By reaching out beyond close familial ties, the loose ties of the community network can open up opportunities to pursue formal financial resources from having forged ties with others possessing greater resources of knowledge, expertise, and beyond. Through connection with others unlike themselves, entrepreneurs may become acquainted with provisions previously unavailable within their smaller network of friends and families. Therefore, community-based support allows for the matching of needs with resources, “necessary for entrepreneurial growth and development” by “bridging the gaps in policy and programmes” usually unknown to nascent entrepreneurs, and access to which community networks can provide (Bates 1997; Bates and Robb 2013; Servon 2005 in Casey, 2014:386).

A component of community social capital known as associational social capital is strongly characterized by membership, and therefore, operates through internal bonding across an array of functions and communal activities. The prerequisite of this is participatory behaviour and civic orientation from where repeated engagement with individuals in a community or in an organizational context promotes group-level commitment (Morales and Geurts, 2007; Putnam, 2000; Stolle, 1998). Such interchanges, have been shown to flourish alongside democratic discourse, representation, and social problem solving with potential politicizing influences, hence, making this form of social capital a force capable of insisting institutions to respond⁵² (Morales and Geurts, 2007; Stolle, 1998).

As with the previously discussed social capital, while heterogeneous ties among

⁵² “...top-down supports are important as they may facilitate the efforts of community-based organizations; however, support from community-based organizations seems to be critical for low-wealth entrepreneurs. Without such, low-wealth entrepreneurs may be less likely to experience the gains top-down supports may deliver.” (Casey 2014:386)

members of the community may possess strength in numbers and develop internal bonding useful to channel and collaborate towards shared concerns and interests, the lack of vertical networks and the prolonged homogeneity in its membership would eventually impede its contribution to entrepreneurial growth and expansion (Casey, 2014:371-372).

3.3.4 Institutional Capital

The ability to connect to institutional capital and access its financial resources can be seen as a success indicator of an entrepreneurial venture due to the complementarity of bottom-up and top-down reception, support and validation. Whilst it is an important connection to establish for the more experienced entrepreneur, it is even more crucial for start-up and low-wealth entrepreneurs (Casey, 2014). Like community social capital, access to institutional social capital influences the survival of ventures (Bates and Robb, 2008 in Casey, 2014:367) as demonstrated by the availability of external sources of capital that can be drawn upon from these connections (Parker and Bleghitar, 2006 in Casey 2014:367). Through strategic networks in a wider open space, a “cognitive-lock formed by homogeneous like-mindedness” can be avoided, making way for new knowledge transmission (Eklinder-Frick et al. 2011 in Lee, 2011:185), “divergent pursuits and atypical trajectories” (Kleinbaum 2012 in Lee, 2011:183) which are usually limited by the boundaries of smaller and denser social networks (Jones, 2009; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007 in Lee, 2011:183). The scarcity of connections at these borderline meso/macro-level networks would suggest the availability of more uncharted brokerage opportunities and non-redundant connections that can be called on for the promotion of innovation and new resource acquisition essential for entrepreneurial dynamic and growth, beyond what family, friends or community

social capital can offer (Martinez and Aldrich 2011; Stam et al. 2014; Stam 2010 in Lee, 2011:185-187).

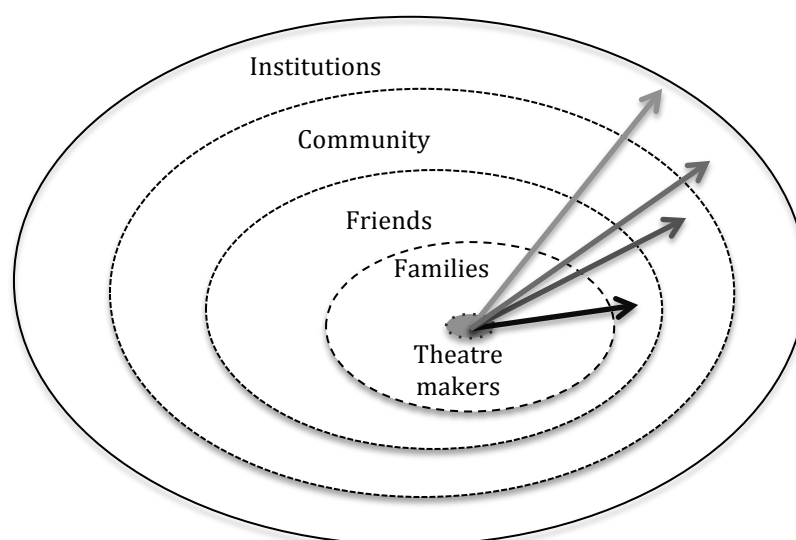
Relations that are yet to be formed between two networks demonstrate structural holes which brokers can help connect, and in doing so, facilitate a more efficient strategic orientation and renewal, which promotes corporate ventures (Jones, 2005; Pappas and Wooldridge 2007; Lee, 2011:183). The role of brokerage in previously unconnected networks is to fill these gaps by bringing to the fore potential relational-regional outcomes⁵³ (Feldman and Zoller, 2013:26 in Lee, 2011:184).

To some extent, institutional social capital shares with community social capital a sense of location, but in particular, institutions have concerns over the type of industry under consideration in shaping innovation or developments that work in tandem with their policies. Hence, beyond the influence of “city decision makers, and the broader network of neighbourhood councils” which support civic activities (Muso and Weare, 2017:2524), institutional social capital also takes issue with the industry and its distinction of “urban, suburban, non-urban” locations as well as its classification in the level of technology or “innovative venture” (Casey, 2014:377). The aim for institutions would be for the social capital to be matched with “organizational purpose” capable of being “transformed into tangible civic results” (Muso and Weare, 2017: 2528).

⁵³ “...the dealmaker plays a central role mediating, shaping and configuring regional entrepreneurial networks by sharing experience, information and resources among entrepreneurs and investors, thereby facilitating new firm creation and supporting entrepreneurship (...) bridging the relationships between individual investors and entrepreneurs who are responsible for the day-to-day execution of firms in the region.” (Feldman and Zoller, 2013:26 in Lee, 2011:184)

A particular requisite at the level of institutional social capital is a “sophisticated cognitive capability” (Lambooy, 2010:878 in Lee, 2011: 205) to acquire the appropriate language and coded behaviour in order to converse with potential collaborators and resource providers when processing and strategizing towards a legitimate entrepreneurial plan of action (Middleton 2013; Shepherd 2015; Stringfellow and MacLean 2014; Lee and Jones 2015:339 in Lee, 2011:205). In fact, having such as “feel for the game” is crucial to be able to accurately perceive and coordinate entrepreneurial moves based on specific contextual needs and expectations since such “protocols of communication” function as lenses through which formation of networks take place (Lee 2009; Lorenzen and Zimmerman, 2007; Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998 in Lee, 2011: 205). Furthermore, the framing of cognitive schemes eases the explanation of future possible and desirable encounters essential in knowledge and resource exchanges in these networks (D’Andreta et al. 2016:294 in Lee, 2011: 202). Through such mediations, along with shared business philosophies, these networks meet at the congruence of their mission to form business clusters (Villena et al. 2011; Para-Requena et al. 2010 in Lee, 2011:410), thus, gearing towards entrepreneurial growth and longevity. Eventually, through cohesive and collaborative partnerships, these inter-group networks of divergent expertise grow into increasingly close networks with strategic alliance (Inkpen and Tsang, 2005 in Lee, 2011:206). While these networks can continue to be nurtured, identifying new structural holes and gaps in network relations would be an entrepreneurial logic toward achieving sustainability. To summarise, the elaboration on the levels of social capital representing the helper network of theatre makers in this research is illustrated in **DIAGRAM 3**.

DIAGRAM 3: Levels of social capital

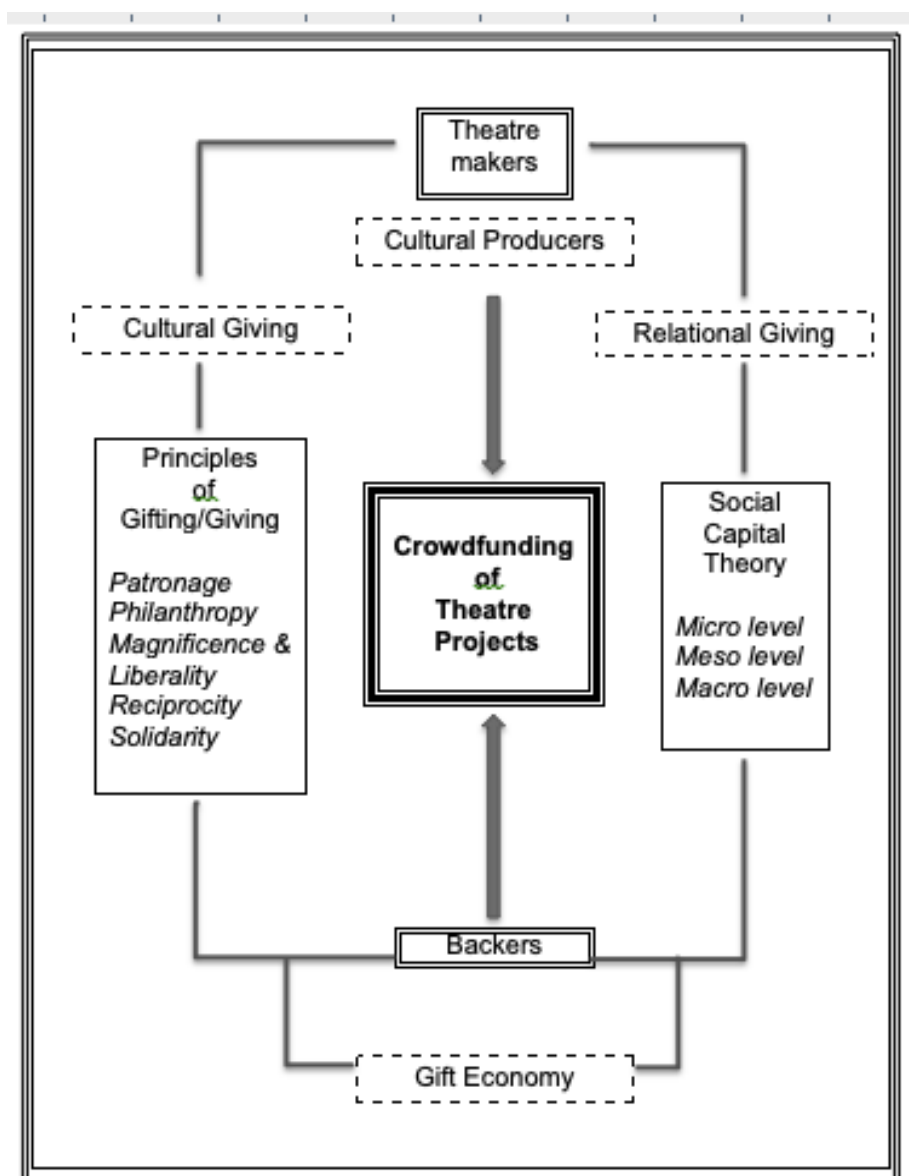


Key:

Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACE, local councils, trusts & foundations, charities, universities, other funding bodies
Communal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood, local businesses, associations, organizations, specific interest networks
Friendship Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends of friends • Artistic & Non-artistic circle • Personal sphere & Work sphere • Close & Acquaintances
Familial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends of family • Nuclear-Extended

Due to their social connections at different domains of the micro, meso, and macro, it follows that the inquiry into the research should consider the employment of methods that would help articulate the interplay at work. Having established the relational ties of backers to theatre makers, and their respective distinctiveness influencing their motivation for giving, this chapter concludes the theoretical framework of the research in parallel with the Principles of Gifting/Giving in *Chapter 2*, which can be summarised in **DIAGRAM 4** below. I now turn to the research methodology in the next chapter.

DIAGRAM 4: Theoretical framework of research



Chapter 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the research methodology underpinning this study, the methods undertaken, and the challenges that arose from the engagement with data collection. With research on crowdfunding largely taking a quantitative methodological investigation, my research is an attempt to provide input based on a qualitative inquiry. Here, I outline the secondary and primary sources from which data for this study were gathered, detailing how the different methods contribute to the overall input and analysis. As an exploratory study that delves into users' experience of a relatively new funding mechanism by involving their networks of social relations, I have taken a funnel approach to data collection that begins with a wide range of observations before concentrating on a number of concerns arising from the research area (Taylor, 2013: 27). With further revelation from the data, the research went through a tapering process to allow for a progressive focus on salient issues. Regardless, I found myself revisiting these different sets of data repeatedly in non-linear fashion at the tapering stage, presenting a messier and more convoluted process than I had foreseen but, without which, they would not have jointly contributed to address the research questions in *Chapter 9*. The following details the process and justification for data collection from reports, a crowdfunding platform, qualitative interviews, multiple cases, and their thematic analysis, ending with a critical reflection of meta-data.

4.1 Data from Reports and Crowdfunding Platform

I began my journey on data collection by frequenting the campaign pages on a few crowdfunding platforms where I had chosen to monitor theatre projects. Initially, I had started to roughly tabulate data that could be obtained directly from the

campaign pages when I realized that making sense of them would demand that I was also aware of the institutional take on crowdfunding, in the particular context of the UK. Following this, I embarked on a thematic analysis⁵⁴ of official and independent reports following the launch of '2010 Year of Philanthropy' that called for a return to philanthropic giving to culture to include small private giving as well as the traditional larger amount of giving from the wealthy to capture the specific context of crowdfunding phenomenon in theatre funding. While data on the funding of theatre productions, and in particular, smaller non-profit theatre companies were not readily available, data from documentary sources, nevertheless, provided an understanding of the UK arts funding climate generally. As an outsider looking in, I felt that the contextual data was crucial to orientate myself to the UK scenario, a foundation which helped in making sense of the data from the crowdfunding platform and the interview responses later on.

Alongside the background data from reports, textual analysis of theatre project campaigns on the *crowdfunder.co.uk* website since its founding in 2010 provided numerical and textual evidence on the types of theatre projects, and information on theatre makers who have chosen to raise funds through the platform. The purpose of this was two-fold. Firstly, to identify the trends in online solicitation of donations and online private giving, and how these gave rise to the types of theatre projects that got funded. Additionally, I expected the campaigns on the platform to reveal particular features of resource mobilization which could then inform the research on the ways the platform was used by theatre makers, affecting the kind of 'ask' they made, attracting the responses from backers that eventually gravitate towards meeting theatre makers' funding targets. Secondly, going through the campaigns also presented myself with a pool of potential respondents who might agree to be

⁵⁴ identifying and examining common or repeated themes in datasets (Terry, et. al., 2017; Guest, et.al., 2012)

interviewed, and those whose subsequent crowdfunding could potentially present the opportunity for longitudinal case studies.

4.2 From Reports and Crowdfunding Platform to Qualitative Interviews

The process of sifting through the campaigns in the textual analysis stage led to the classification of theatre makers into seven categories: new graduate theatre companies, emerging theatre companies, established theatre companies, solo theatre performers, amateur dramatics, youth theatre, community theatre; out of which, three groups have emerged as the largest groups of crowdfunding platform users. As groups which have resorted most to crowdfunding, established theatre companies, graduate theatre companies, and individual artists, suggest the greater need for funding since being companies, the production aspect is the core business of their enterprise. Additionally, as it turned out, these groups were more approachable, with existing company websites (and mostly active social media platforms), which would complement the study of their crowdfunding campaigns. The target was to interview ten theatre makers from each of the three types of companies, totalling thirty interviewees altogether, and a corresponding number of backers to comply within the recommendations of research methodologists⁵⁵ (Marshall et al., 2013:13). However, while the number of target interviewees with theatre makers was achieved despite their busy performance preparation, their tight tour schedules and precarious nature of work, the task of securing thirty backers of theatre for interviews proved more challenging than expected, causing longer waiting periods and frequent rescheduling, which meant lengthening the duration originally located for interviews. The research finally ended with thirty theatre makers and fifteen backers. With the reduced sample size of backers, this

⁵⁵ twenty to thirty interviewees for Creswell and Morse, thirty to fifty for Denzin and Lincoln

was later compensated with published comments from the campaign pages of theatre projects on the platform *crowdfunder.co.uk*. Out of the thirty theatre makers, follow-up interviews were conducted with five graduate theatre makers⁵⁶, three solo theatre performers⁵⁷, and three established theatre makers⁵⁸ to further probe the cases. The recommendation for case studies evidence is a minimum of six for Yin and a maximum of four or five for Creswell, where three to five interviews are recommended for each case study (Marshall et al., 2013:12). Thus, this study ended with the recommended number of cases for further study.

For this research however, as an industry outsider with a limited access to potential interviewees, and as someone unknown to them, my approach to studying their specific circumstances could not solely be based on my interviews with them but needed to be supplemented by information gathered from their company websites, crowdfunding campaign pages, *Facebook* pages, and where possible, by attending their performances. This allowed for a more holistic understanding of their enterprise without being completely naïve about the project(s) they had crowdfunded, while easing the interview process and facilitating the engagement with the interviewees as they took place. The process had also kept me posted with their past, current, and future projects, and how these have come together as the companies' repertoire.

As an inquiry into the experience of theatre makers, obtaining direct responses from respondents required that the qualitative interview became the main method employed in this research. The essence of the research inquiry, which lies in the exploration of respondents' crowdfunding experience, their "conceptualization and

⁵⁶ *BESPOKE, DAPPER, DUPLICATE, INTREPID, and BLOOM!*

⁵⁷ *Belle, Jules, and Tabatha.*

⁵⁸ *KJ, MA, and SH*

construction of their social worlds”, made semi-structured, open topic guides core components of the data collection in this endeavour (Durand and Chantler, 2014:50). In order to gather “descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee” with regards to the phenomenon in question Kvale (1983:174) asserts the importance of seeing the research topic from their point of view, and seeking the underlying formation of these perspectives. Thus, where further query was needed, I had followed up the first interview with two other interviews at different stages of their post-crowdfunding experience.

In the earlier stage of the interview, I adopted a semi-structured approach to the interview. My concern at this point was to ensure a consistency in the questions I asked, and to remain objective while withholding from any personal projections onto respondents. As an industry outsider and a non-native speaker, however, I learned that a strictly semi-structured approach where prompts and questions were predetermined for the interviewees (Durand and Chantler, 2014:50) worked to a limited extent since reaching a certain level of topical depth was not always achieved beyond a generic description of the crowdfunding experience. Hence, as these earlier interviews tended to generate rather brief responses, and seemed to be merely scratching the surface of the phenomenon in question, I later treated the task as a pilot to be reworked into a more productive data-revealing approach. Also, by adopting a more conversational slant, I managed to gain more insight into the respondents’ struggles beyond funding which extended into their professional concerns as well, some of which informed the research more about crowdfunding than its appearance on the outside. Therefore, the interview benefitted from the oscillation between a semi-structured⁵⁹ and a broader topic⁶⁰ approach

⁵⁹ Durrand and Chantler describe semi-structured interviews as having “a set of questions to cover, but which can be rephrased to suit the understanding and vocabulary of the respondent, and supplemented to probe for more information, or unstructured” (2014:51).

complementarily, a stand I took on the basis of what was best for the aims of the research.

Having established a positive rapport with several respondents by this time, the “flow of ‘natural’ conversation” then set the tone and future opportunity for follow-up interviews necessary for case analyses. King (in Cassell and Symon, 2004:2) even goes as far as stating that a ‘relationship free’ interview is not possible for a qualitative researcher and that far from being a distraction, is in fact a part of the research process, where the interviewees actively shape the course of the interview rather than being passive respondents to pre-set questions of the interviewer. Thus, what transpired from the interview process had taken shape from the relationship formed during the interviews from the conversations pertaining to the research topic. In demonstrating an appreciation for respondents’ social and personal contexts Durrand and Chantler (2014:51) advise the researcher to observe that the respondents should not be made to feel like a subject inspected “under the microscope”. Similarly, Sennet (2003) recommended that researchers develop “a relaxed interchange” in eliciting more talk through the freedom to speak without judgment, and with a safe space to do so. Additionally, as my interviewees were concerned about the privacy of their backers, and had agreed to speak about their experience anonymously, I have complied and given them pseudonyms wherever they are referred in the thesis. Considering that backers are related to the theatre makers in one way or another, I have similarly honoured the anonymity of both parties. Subsequently, I have standardized this for all sources of data where real names or registered IDs appeared such as the published comments on campaign pages.

⁶⁰ Durrand and Chantler point to the advantage of using unstructured interviews as being “more likely to elicit the views and priorities of the respondents rather than merely gathering their responses to the researcher’s concerns” (2014:51)

At the point of the interviews, crowdfunding as a funding mechanism for theatre projects (as well as other projects) was still expanding, and despite having existed for almost a decade in the UK, I decided that any possible informative source could feed into the research. Thus, I did not limit the interviews to theatre makers who have used crowdfunding, and backers who have donated to crowdfund projects, but I also extended data gathering to informants in organizations whose jobs include overseeing the funding side of theatre productions⁶¹. Hence, the research also drew on the perspectives of a head of business development, an agency researcher and a funding officer in the hope of painting a fuller picture of the crowdfunding phenomenon by bringing in some industry insight on funding management.

Since obtaining willing interviewees was more encouraging from theatre makers than from backers of theatre projects, the natural move was to focus on theatre makers and welcome possible insights from the comparison among them. Thus, after the initial interviews, I followed-up with interviews of respondents who were willing to share their post-crowdfunding experience, and development in their practice since they last crowdfunded, their relationship with backers, and their reflection upon using crowdfunding over a longer duration. With the willingness of a few respondents to continue participating in subsequent interviews, I was able to pursue my query on multiple theatre companies longitudinally. The opportunity to study them as units of analyses allowed for crowdfunding to be set against the wider backdrop of the current funding climate. Such approach generally relies upon multiple methods, which require the researcher to be sensitive to

⁶¹ Taylor (2002) distinguishes informants from respondents: the former being experts whose particular knowledge helps researchers "make sense of what is happening in the field" while the latter being participants who are in the position to "share their own perspectives and experiences". Their differing axes, when balanced with the principles of breadth and quality should vary by research orientation and goal (Alvesson and Ashcraft in Symon and Cassell, 2012).

opportunities that might arise during data collection other than those planned⁶². Additionally, the flexibility in case study research design would allow for adaptation in probing planned but also emergent, unanticipated findings that enrich the case (Robson, 2002; Stake, 1995:55). This aspect would go hand in hand with the design of the research intended to explore emerging processes or behaviours and welcome new lines of inquiry (Hartley in Cassell and Symon, 2004:4).

The flexibility and freedom to gather from reports, websites, interviews and ethnographic observations provided multiple perspectives, which, although separately and individually partially informational, could be constructed into a meaningful whole, much like a *bricoleur* who pieces sets of representations into situational specifics (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 4; Derrida, 1978 in Taylor 2013:27) or a quilter who synthesizes from interweaving viewpoints (Taylor 2013:27). In this research, a combination of qualitative methods (Pritchard in Symon and Cassell, 2012) took a methodological combination of the integrative approach where interviews with theatre makers were preliminary to studying the cases more intensively through follow-up interviews and an ethnographic-like approach; while a dialogic approach subsumed into the bigger picture between the data available from the crowdfunding platform as well as the reports combined. Thus, I decided that such combination was necessary to explain the transformation, and the interplay of forces between the top-down⁶³ and bottom-up⁶⁴ structuration of the theatre funding landscape. With examination into crowdfunding, concerns with relations and structuration of the “individual micro-practices” with “larger structures” at work could not be ignored and naturally, the research

⁶² Hartley (in Cassell and Symon, 2004:2-3) advises that a case study researcher be opportunistic in data collection, which is best addressed by multiple methods.

⁶³ such as ACE and DCMS

⁶⁴ such as backers and communities

attention was directed beyond the micro level towards the ecosystem of the individuals and the institutions within it (Pritchard in Symon and Cassell, 2012: 60).

With the multiple cases, as respondents grew more comfortable with being interviewed, the rapport developed has eased the process, such that respondents have transitioned from talking in the realm of public space into an increasingly private space. Over this period, semi-structured interviews have become more open-ended and unstructured or narrative-like, which provided insight into the theatre makers' role beyond their projects, business models and operations, personal links with old and new partnerships as well as their day-to-day challenges as theatre makers, all of which have painted a clearer picture of their practice. While I had been following their *Facebook* pages and company websites for the latest updates on their projects, I also sought opportunities to watch the crowdfunded projects being performed, be those promoted at the crowdfunding campaign stage, performed during tours at the post-crowdfunding stage, or as scheduled performances at fringe festivals in order to observe the atmosphere where their possible online and offline supporters were present as audience members while also gathering understanding of their locality and the communities where their performances were held. Keeping in line with the exploratory disposition of the research, as well as the limitations and opportunities which have presented themselves, I found the cases to be iteratively polar, involving "characteristics of interest that are extreme or unique" (Mills, et. al., 2010) which analysis intended to account for the breadth of the crowdfunding landscape for theatre but more so to provide depth into the phenomenon by delving into specific entry stages (such as graduate, solo, established) against the levels of social capital which characterize their social relations with backers. Therefore, the outcome resulted in an analytical generalization instead of a statistical

generalization (Schwandt, 2007). Since its theoretical replication was by replication logic⁶⁵ rather than sampling logic⁶⁶, these cases only needed to be representative of a larger pool, hence, their numbers need not reflect statistical sample or the operational enumeration of the entire pool of potential respondents (Yin, 1998). Here, validation by logic, whereby emergent relationships can be confirmed by replicated cases, does not require studying the different groups according to their proportion in the *crowdfunder.co.uk* data. Otherwise, sampling logic would suggest examining more established theatre companies (a percentage out of 182 projects) than graduate theatre companies (a percentage out of 167 projects), and even fewer individual artists (a percentage out of 19 projects), which would be beyond the capacity of this research. With the marked differences demonstrated in the various degrees of their experience in the theatre industry reflecting their diverse preoccupation with funding, these longitudinal multiple cases sat between an exploratory and descriptive cross-case analysis; and as a research framed by Social Capital Theory, it was only apt to follow this with a cross section of funding sources obtained from individuals, close social networks, communities and institutions.

To recapitulate, the longitudinal cases followed five graduate theatre companies, three established theatre companies and three sole traders, representing the three most observable and highly participative groups of theatre makers on the crowdfunding platform. To ascertain the repercussions of crowdfunding upon the project and the direction which the companies have taken from there onwards, it would have been ideal to follow their development for two to three years as the impact of their first crowdfunding campaign and success would start to wear off

⁶⁵ This refers to validation by logic, whereby the hypotheses are replicated case by case, and used to confirm emergent relationships (Ridder, 2017)

⁶⁶ This refers to logic by sampling based on a statistical representation of the wider population units (Schwandt, 2007).

(this duration was based on initial telephone interviews and *Facebook* trawling, observable decrease in updates of group projects and a turn towards individual projects). With limited time resources, I followed the theatre companies for eighteen months to two years instead, during which period I mapped out their milestones, and communicated with them via email and *Facebook Messenger*, whichever being their preferred means of sharing about their practice.

4.3 Thematic Analysis from Multiple Data Sets

Datasets gathered from the different methods in this research underwent a thematic analysis (TA) for the purpose of coding and eventually addressing the research question. As with other research employing a number of qualitative methods, the thematic analysis of data drawn from this research served to broaden the reach over potential issues, which might become evident in the process (Mark and Yardley, 2004). With the availability and accessibility of secondary and primary datasets at different times during the research period, thematic analysis has the flexibility for theme development to be linked as summary markers to data, independently at first, and then for comparisons to be made from the relative frequencies of concurrent codes as the analysis progressed (Namey et al., 2008:138). Due to the multiple cases of the study, I found the stage to be taxing particularly with the revelation of new data which changed the way I looked at my data from time to time, that eventually I found it more satisfying to manually analyse them rather than using *Nvivo*⁶⁷.

For data harvested from a combination of reports, a website, semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observations, culminating in multiple cross cases, analyzing thematically meant being free to move from explicit (semantic) to implicit

⁶⁷ *Nvivo* is a software management of qualitative data (www.qsrinternational.com)

(latent) ideas in making sense of the relationship between concepts and data (Alhojailan, 2012:40). Particularly with this research where data collection involved interviewing different categories of respondents and at different phases of experience they have with crowdfunding, thematic analysis made way for identifying numerous cross-references between evolving themes and the entire data (Hayes, 1997 in Alhojailan, 2012:45). With the combination of inductive and deductive approaches in the analysis of the data (Firth and Gleeson 2004; Hayes 1997), it became possible to oscillate between precise content and broader generalizations involving comparative methodologies to link themes and data more effectively (Patton, 1990 in Alhojailan, 2012:40). In due course, I found this approach useful to encompass their experience from crowdfunding to post-crowdfunding.

The thematic analysis of data in this research benefitted from the guidance of Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework consists of three stages: data reduction, data display and data conclusion drawing. In the first phase of data reduction, data was sorted through a process of selecting, summarizing and subsuming into larger patterns (Miles and Huberman, 1994:11). Scholars advise using an ocular method to scan the data for patterns after getting a feel for the text, then moving on to tabulate it for content organization (Ryan and Bernard, 2003:11; Bernard, 2000; Attard and Coulson, 2012:501; Kim, 2008:12 in Alhojailan, 2012:43). The second phase of data reduction followed the highlighting of excerpts that could be used to answer the research question. Moving on to the third phase, highlighted excerpts are then broken down into smaller segments for further identification and classification with regards to the research focus (Alhojailan, 2012:44). From here, the units of data are reviewed for significant meaning of what is actually being said and for conclusions to be drawn and framed around theoretical assumptions

before verifying them with statements and respondents' responses (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Halldorson, 2009 in Alhojailan, 2012:42). The next step is to display the data as an "organized, compressed assembly of information" by arranging concepts and thoughts aiming to make sense of the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994:11). This involves an exploration into their similarities, differences and interrelationships and collating them into conceptual clusters in relation to the research question. To facilitate analysis, scholars advise immediately accessible data display in various forms such as thematic maps, tables, figures, and direct quotations to complement the drawing of data and conclusion (Yin, 2010; Gibbs, 2002; Patton, 2002). This chosen framework is intended to both sift and amplify the concerns and themes of the larger dataset without compromising or altering its scope.

4.4 Critical Reflection Memo as Meta-data

Apart from the interview data that has been collected, what was striking and deserving of a considerable degree of reflexivity lies in my experience with theatre makers who were quick to decline the request for an interview, feeling that their campaign did not 'quite' meet the target which led them to prematurely conclude that their input lacked value to the research, hence, creating a barrier to a fairer discourse on the crowdfunding of theatre projects. I feel this inaccessibility to be a loss of valuable input to the research, distorted by the assumption that crowdfunding is only worth talking about if campaigns had met their funding targets, suggesting that the sole measurement of crowdfunding campaigns was limited to the monetary gain through the platform. Moreover, the reluctance of these theatre makers to participate in the interview implied their uneasiness to talk about what they perceived as a 'failed' crowdfunding campaign almost as a personal reflection of their own practice, despite the openness of an exploratory

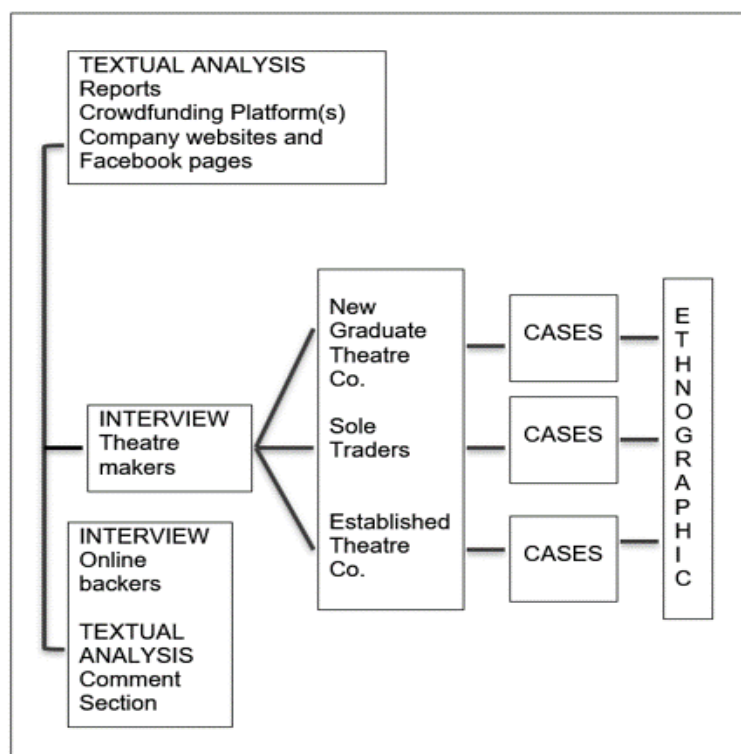
approach to the study. As I later discovered, a few theatre makers who were less reluctant to speak about their crowdfunding campaign actually found other ways of funding their project offline but were mostly affected by the result of their crowdfunding campaign as it had not meet their expectations of crowdfunding outcomes. The fact that I found the least reluctance from new graduate theatre makers, followed by the individual artists, and highest averseness from established theatre makers, prompted a link between the need to fundraise online and its effect on their reputation.

Declining interviews (aside from work schedule factors and other commitments), presumably also had to do with the presupposition that the research would only benefit from the insight of campaigns which were successfully funded, meaning those that have met the full target, exceeded the target, or at very least accumulated quite closely to the donation amount aimed. This brings the question of the 'successful campaign' yardstick attributed by the project founders that invites different interpretations by the crowdfunding service provider than by theatre makers themselves. Where service providers have considered them as successfully funded campaigns on the platform, theatre makers tend to consider the amount insignificant to be considered even as a moderate contribution to their total target. 'Small' is indeed relative to a company with more than ten years of experience who might see £1500 crowdfunded donations as nothing to be fussed about, whereas newer companies might perceive the same amount as a huge fundraising success, and therefore, proud to acknowledge that they have done well, or raised more than they could have hoped for. In this sense, some theatre makers were more inclined to see their unmet funding target in defeatist terms while others saw crowdfunding as operating in capacities beyond its immediate financial resource.

As I progressed towards the last campaign pages of the platform *crowdfunder.co.uk*, a particular trend became increasingly noticeable. By the second half of the campaign pages towards the last page on the 'film and theatre' category on the platform (it became more apparent in the last quarter of the lists of campaigns), any link to the company webpage, social media, email, telephone also became increasingly absent, hence, making it difficult to contact these companies. As I discovered, the number of defunct *Facebook* pages had also increased with the last sets of campaigns on the platform. Noticeably, there were theatre companies that have ceased to update their company websites as well as those which were no longer operating. Among theatre companies that have ended their operation, a few responded to my request for an interview but had politely declined my invitation. This made me question the detriment of a crowdfunding campaign to the reputation of a theatre company, or whether crowdfunding was a funding approach that was attempted mostly because of its ubiquity, and to test how far a theatre company could push itself to obtain public and institutional validation before making a decision to end its enterprise. However, this seemed to be a topic in its own right, not an aspect I am able to dedicate substantially in this research, although it points to the value and risk of reputation as a symbolic capital, and since Bourdieu asserts that capitals convert and mutate, then this would eventually lead the discussion back to social capital and other forms of convertible capital.

To conclude, this chapter elaborates on the methods undertaken in this study, outlining the approaches taken while considering the challenges along the way, eventually contributing to the analysis of data. **DIAGRAM 5** provides a summary of the research methods employed in the data collection explained earlier. Having justified my methodological approach, the following chapters will highlight the keyfindings from the data collected.

DIAGRAM 5: Summary of research methods employed in the data collection process



Chapter 5

CROWDFUNDED THEATRE PROJECT CAMPAIGNS

The first part of the chapter summarizes a decade of the ACE's funding reports from 2009/2010 to 2018/2019, and outlines NESTA's reports on its experimentation with match crowdfunding following the reception of *crowdfunding.uk* among artists and the British public. Following this, the second part of the chapter presents the data on theatre projects crowdfunded on the *crowdfunder.uk* platform between September 2011 and April 2018, providing a snapshot of the composition of theatre makers; types of theatre projects campaigned on the platforms and highlights significant trends in the crowdfunding of theatre projects within the stated duration. The aim of the chapter is to locate the practice of crowdfunding within a larger national setting constrained by a narrative of austerity and resilience, cumulating in the crowdfunding trends the situation has given shape.

5.1 ACE and the Arts Funding Narrative from 2009/2010 to 2018/2019

With the beginning of cuts in arts funding in 2009/10, ACE forewarned the need for resilience in ensuring that the value of arts was maintained in the coming years, particularly in safeguarding the delivery of its five national outcomes under the keywords: excellence, reach, engagement, diversity and innovation. In comparison to the American private patronage or the European state funding models, ACE assured that the UK's plural funding typology would be "more secure" while also encouraging "culturally diverse" works in managing the austere decade.

As funding cuts continued to take effect in "the context of severe recession" of 2010/11, ACE admittedly found itself in a difficult position of deciding its funding

recipients and distribution, which included its 880 regularly funded organizations, responsible for bringing “high quality work to a wide range of people”. Although its 10-year strategy had set priorities for funding selection to reflect both artistic and geographical terms, ACE warned ahead that the difficulty in funding deliberations would be worsened by cuts in local authority funding. It predicted that the decision of some local councils to cut their cultural budgets would pose a greater challenge to arts organizations across the country, hence, its further push for arts organizations to work towards resilience. The advice was for arts organizations to multiply its private income and reach out to the private sector for increased private giving through improved fundraising skills.

By 2011/12, ACE launched its CATALYST programmes emphasizing the role of philanthropy in continuing to help increase private giving as part of “England’s 3 legged stool model” in serving a culturally plural system. *Catalyst Capacity-Building* was set up to “encourage private giving to culture” (as with the heritage sector) and assist cultural organizations in developing skills to “fundraise from private donors, corporate sources, trusts and foundations”, while *Catalysts Strategic Fund* was mobilized as a one-off grant scheme for organizations with less experience and capacity in fundraising. Under its commitment to financial sustainability, ACE itself underwent an internal restructuring which ended with a smaller workforce, forcing it to intensify its effort in maintaining key priorities on increasing cultural attendance and forming new partnerships to address below national average cultural engagement in the country.

With the national narrative of austerity entering 2012/13, ACE pressed on the need for the UK cultural life to thrive, revealing its five goals’ focus on increasing cultural activities among communities across England, encouragement of resilient and

innovative practices, and the growing urgency on a diverse and skilled arts and cultural leadership to attract resources under the pressing financial environment.

In the following financial year of 2013/14, ACE reported an inverse relationship between funding cuts and private income whereby the greater funding cuts had forced an increase in private income for arts organizations. Its 2% reduction in the funding of NPOs from 29% to 27% was compensated by a 3% growth in earned income 49% to 52%⁶⁸. Meanwhile, the 3% reduction in local authority funding and public grants from 12% to 9% was offset by 1% increase in contributed income (consisting of donations, philanthropy, trust and sponsorship) from 11% to 12%. As with 2012/13, ACE maintained its five goals set in 2013/14 emphasising the importance of distribution across geography and resilience across arts organizations.

In 2015/16, ACE had continued to make the case for public funding as part of a mixed model. In its move to revive communities, ACE maintained its support for local authorities, which had continued to support the arts. The year saw ACE officially committing towards an increase in funding distribution to arts organizations outside London with 75% allocation by 2018, by closing the funding disparity between London and other regions to a 70%/30% distribution from a historical split of 60%/40%. Meanwhile, ACE had resumed to address the serious challenges in local authority funding, counting for “enlightened leaders” to stand by the cultural agenda through its incorporation into the local councils' urban and rural revival with the hastening of devolution. 2015/16 marked the year of ACE's progress towards its support for a mixed funding portfolio through the introduction of a new matched funding mechanism, *Catalyst Evolve*, another capacity building

⁶⁸ ACE 2013/14 Report

fund following its previous *Catalyst Capacity-Building* and *Catalyst Strategic Fund* programmes in further diversifying income streams for the sector. In its latest *Catalyst* programme aimed at growing private income and developing resilience, ACE noted the progress in acquiring alternative funding streams.

The following year saw a continued geographic concern of funding distribution and cultural access to all audience groups as ACE continued to push for enterprise, innovation, and partnerships among its funded arts organizations. Along with the adoption of an enterprising and innovative culture, NPO partnerships with the private sector and commercial organizations had shown signs of growth in income with an increase of 5% from the previous year leading to a 50% total contributed income of £200 million. As 2016/17 marked the end of the two *Catalyst* funds launched in 2011/12, ACE resumed its delivery of providing arts organizations with capacity building, confidence and skills through *Catalyst Evolve*. In the third instalment of its *Catalyst* programme, ACE committed £5.2 million for the training in fundraising and attracting philanthropic giving, pledging £12.5 million match fund to counter the “uncertainty of financial environment”. As local authority funding significantly decreased by 17% (£236 million), ACE aimed at retaining its funding capacity at a 5% increase in proportion for investment in arts organizations outside London, in line with its aim towards a 75% regional funding proportion by 2018. ACE expressed awareness in the “risk of not allocating resources fairly, geographically”, as the allotted lottery investment drew towards the end in 2018. In anticipation for the expiring support and to counter the effect of regional disparities in economic growth outside London, ACE would be allocating NPOs outside London a 4% increase in investment for 2018 to 2022. On the whole, with the additional cut in local authorities, ACE foresaw a greatly reduced investment in the arts and culture impinging on the overall goals of ACE and DCMS, hence, the

necessity of adopting innovative funding approaches to generate alternative income in weathering the economic climate. Due to the continued toll on resilience, ACE had also worked alongside the government to explore opportunities for market building to cushion the blow to the sector.

In 2017/18, ACE urged for a stronger push of operational resilience within companies and organizations to face the “ongoing challenges surrounding funding”, as it upheld operational resilience as one of its five goals’ “absolute priority”. By then, ACE had established the inevitability for organizations to accommodate to the latest change in the funding scenario as evident in the capacity of its piloted crowdfunding to attract new donors. The pilot pointed to the role of social media as a medium for project promotion and intermediary for developing new audienceship, whilst highlighting the special hold that local projects placed on donors which prompted private giving (48% had only learned about the projects through social media, 64% became new audience to the projects they helped donate, 41% had donated to support local projects). With the £251,500 match fund allocated to the crowdfunding pilot programme leveraging £405,941 from backers, ACE saw matched crowdfunding as the latest promising mechanism to attract private giving.

Coming to the end of its 10-year strategy, ACE proposed for a step forward in resilience, this time in the capacity to draw in “return several times over with international cultural presence” as proven in the skills of arts organizations to develop financial resilience. ACE’s corporate plan for 2018-2019 resumed much of its previous 2015-2018 plan, remarking a similar concern it had with government funding remaining at a standstill since its last spending review (2017/8: 6). It noted micro-macronomic implications on the cultural ecology caused by “the pressure on

public funding for art and culture at a national and local level” (2017/8: 6). While its 2018-2019 plan applauded the progress arts organisations had thus far achieved in earned income and revenues, ACE recognized the risk of reputation that arts organizations faced in seeking funds from commercial activities. It fully acknowledged that maintaining audience loyalty through artistic quality meant being “sufficiently [and] financially stable to innovate and take artistic risks”, which placed arts organizations in a conundrum between survival and autonomy. Therefore, with the continuation of austerity measures, ACE had continued to co-fund local authorities’ investments in artistic and cultural projects to counter the competition for funding from other sectors as each fought for “a piece of the humble pie”⁶⁹.

ACE’s financial plan have had to reconsider the added challenge for arts and culture following the decline in lottery income caused by a growing competition from other ‘good causes’ funding recipients despite the increase in National Lottery funding over the last decades to “mitigate the effects of less direct grant funding from the government” (ACE 2018-2019 Plan). Thus, as a sector already acutely affected by the local authority spending cuts, ACE predicted that prolonged austerity into 2020 would continue to place arts and culture at risk. In fact, ACE forewarned a further threat to the sector as it also risks being declined EU funding programmes with the cementing of Brexit. Besides that, the prioritization of frontline services as it has always been would continue to overshadow the arts sector, thus, forcing the latter into an infinite struggle for “greater financial resilience” in the coming years. Under these intensifying conditions, ACE felt that the role of crowdfunding and private funding, along with their benefits and

⁶⁹ ACE 2018-2019 Plan, p.6

drawbacks would become increasingly inevitable (ACE Corporate Plan 2018-2020, Britain Thinks, 2018: 61).

In short, reports in the last decade have been concerned with a financially testing time that had required the ACE to diversify and persuade arts organizations while they remain focussed on priority areas to uphold a balancing act between austerity and cuts, which were inevitable at their end. While ACE acknowledged the struggles and successes of arts organizations, the period could not separate itself from the narrative of austerity and resilience, and as an agent of government's voice, ACE has had to offer ways in which funding allocation to the sector could prepare arts organizations for long-term self-sufficiency.

5.2 NESTA and the Match Crowdfunding Pilot

In 2013, through their monitoring of the use and performance of crowdfunding in financing artistic projects in the UK, NESTA predicted the future outcomes of the method in the following years as well as the potential application of match crowdfunding in stretching the public funding allocated to the cultural sector. In *The New Art of Finance: Making Money Work Harder for the Arts* (NESTA, 2014:17), NESTA indicated a promising start for the alternative method to fundraising with a reported £360 million contribution through available crowdfunding platforms in 2013. With the evidence of positive growth and response to the use of crowdfunding, NESTA was appointed to pilot a match crowdfunding scheme on *crowdfunder.uk* through the collaboration between the funding bodies DCMS, ACE and the Heritage Lottery Fund in the next two years following the government's *Culture White Paper* (2016) which proposed for a more democratic way for institutional funders to decide on projects.

With the capacity of crowdfunding to “tap on public enthusiasm”, “convert ticket-paying audience into investors” demonstrated in the pilot, match crowdfunding was seen as the next logical step to further stretch the distribution of limited funding (NESTA, 2014:18). In principle, the experiment showed the potential for match crowdfunding to leverage from individual donors through pre-arranged institutional funding proportions. In stretching public monies, it presented preliminary evidence of public willingness to donate to conditional partially institutional funded projects, which would essentially allow for the total institutional funds to be shared among more projects than it usually could with the same allocation. While harping on the wider spread of institutional funding distribution, the matched crowdfunding pilot had underplayed the fact that a smaller proportion of institutional funding also meant a greater challenge for arts organizations to fill the increasing gap with not only private giving but potentially more of their earned income. Thus, stretching public monies further actually indicated stretching artists’ means further.

The instrument that could broaden and diversify the range of artistic projects by providing early capital to new artistic talents is the same instrument that would exhaust artists of their resources. While the increase of match crowdfunded projects could see audience benefiting from a greater selection of work, it might have insufficiently considered the struggle for arts organizations at different levels of entry to meet funding conditions, as well as the risks and implications of losing a much needed financial support not only to their sustenance and survival but also existence.

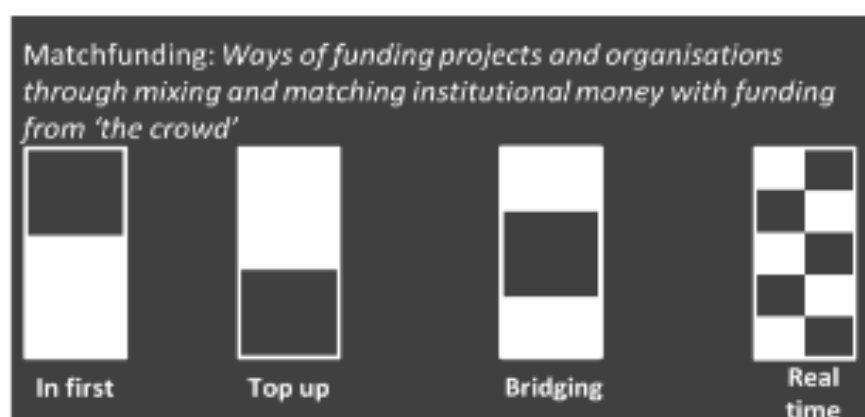
In addition, although NESTA pointed to the capacity for private investment to pressure public funders into directing funding to their chosen projects, it neglected to highlight that the pressure to mobilize donations were disproportionately placed

on project makers (in particular those without a rich network of social, economic and cultural capital), and on average members of the public by indirectly compelling them to donate. It can be argued that under the guise of democratic indicator, backers' effort to help theatre makers meet conditional funding has been misplaced on the public even if their donations signal to institutional funders projects they want to see funded. Although the objective for ACE to reduce its cost of administrating small grants and operating cost of project selection could be achieved by sourcing this amount directly to artistic projects, the report, on the whole, did not seem to consider the artists' side of the scheme. While there were learning points from the implementation of the match crowdfunding models in other countries (*Pozible* in Australia and *CrowdCulture* in Sweden), which outlined benefits such as market-testing for artistic ideas, and strategizing audience development and support base gathered from the crowd engagement through crowdfunding platforms, the report did not account for the specific cultural policy typology that contextualized the support for the arts in each of these countries which gave rise to different forms of struggles.

Its discussion on the potential drawbacks of match crowdfunding forewarned against design challenges in deciding whom should initiate the first matching offer (whether institutions or the public should put their money first) and the tendency for the model to "favour more populist projects" (NESTA, 2014). While the first case could see institutional initiators as signalling institutional legitimacy of artistic projects that fit the prerequisites of institutional funders, public initiators of match crowdfunding could be signalling local cultural consumption, which institutions may not see as fulfilling their funding criteria. Projects arising from a combination of different funding prompts could well result in a more even funding opportunities catering for more established and newer artists provided that institutional funders

are also ready to contribute an agreed matching amount to crowd-led funding prompts, thereby, supporting artistic content and forms that the crowd wants to see being produced. NESTA (2014) acknowledged that projects with more supporters would be in a better position to meet the match more successfully as do projects that were more familiar with supporters. In comparison, because of their unfamiliarity, riskier projects were less capable of getting supporters, which meant operating against the grain of artistic excellence by undermining the room for innovation and its role in the development of diverse artistic creations. Either way, the mechanism of crowdfunding that operates on networks of social relations would mean that connections to individuals with more disposable income and higher digital literacy would be able to capitalize more from such model. Hence, the dynamics of crowdfunding indicated a flow of support that is seeing the dichotomies of popular versus unpopular, high versus low, elitist versus populist, instrumental versus intrinsic, being playing out again, but this time based on supporters with the financial advantage from social networks accessible to artists.

DIAGRAM 6: Match funding models indicating the different stages/time during the campaign which institutional funder intervenes to attract donations from the crowd



Key: grey boxes = institutional funds
(taken from the report *Matching the crowd*, NESTA, 2017)

To counter “unfair access to funding”, NESTA claimed that by technically adjusting the levels of funding from institutional funders with different proportions of funding it can attract crowd donations to riskier projects, thus, offering a solution their foreseeably lack of individual donors (2014:18). This leads to the question of percentage in the institutional support that would sufficiently promote a conducive environment for artistic innovation, and whether an ‘institutional indicator’ of artistic value on certain projects would speak of cultural hegemony and divisive cultural tastes against projects with popular appeal. While placing higher levels of institutional funding on riskier projects would theoretically balance out the flow of private giving, such adjustments may not be able to level proportions of support for artists with limited social capital.

Despite the possibility of crowdfunding to develop into venture financing and revenue sharing, hence, allowing arts organizations to obtain surpluses with increased growth, the report stressed on the complementarity of crowdfunding to existing forms of funding in a “financially constrained climate” rather than a substitute. Objectively, the combination of funds raised from the crowd and institutional funds as shown from the pilot, had produced additional funding for the arts. In times of austerity, it seemed to have a role to play in stretching public monies (even if sparingly) in the sector, however, as informed by NESTA, match crowdfunding would be an unlikely fit for an extended plan to compensate for institutional funding the sector should rightly receive. Its continuous implementation would otherwise be deliberately coercing the public into participation of private giving, and ultimately, compelling artists to fundraise more regularly.

The use of crowdfunding by arts and cultural organizations documented in *Digital Culture 2014* reported an increase in revenue for 18% and 20%, for small and

large organizations respectively in 2014, where theatre and combined art companies formed 56% of total users. Small organizations were predicted to generate 22% to 45% in revenue in 2015 while the revenue for large organizations was expected to grow from 13% to 32% (Digital Culture, 2014).

While the report highlighted the positive outcomes from the use of crowdfunding, it also preliminary reported a number of negative feedbacks from its early adopters. The alternative funding to public subsidy was felt to be an oversold idea (Digital Culture, 2014). In reality, crowdfunding has been more about “passing the fiver around” whereby donations from friends simply changed hands (Digital Culture, 2014). In other words, artists found themselves taking turns to donate, and that receiving donations for their projects meant donating to other projects in return rather than seeing it as genuine help in time of need (Digital Culture, 2014). Thus, crowdfunding was seen to merely mediated favours among project makers. The focus group it interviewed disputed the recommendation of crowdfunding for small organizations, considering the (un)readiness of early stage ventures to draw business support (Digital Culture, 2014). Paradoxically, some artists felt that asking for ‘small’ amounts through crowdfunding was deemed unsuitable; presumably as it might negatively reflect on project makers’ capacity to raise the amount themselves. On the other hand, despite the necessity of asking for considerably larger amounts of fund, expecting private giving might prove unrealistic and therefore, an unachievable target for young companies which are still lacking in credibility and prior accomplishments that trust demands. This drew attention to the ambivalence in what is considered an appropriate asking amount and whether the more banal aspect of artistic labour such as operating costs, deserved to be crowdfunded, or that it should be dedicated only for the funding of major projects.

In a crowdfunding market saturated with profit-based and commercial projects, the experiment by NESTA in collaboration with the ACE was particularly timely as it reveals mechanisms of attracting public donations through the encouragement of institutions to match the funds by rewarding artists accordingly to the amount they have successfully amount raised. Paradoxically, however, it points to how the mechanism works on behalf of the funder in stretching a funding amount further and more thinly across its distribution such that provisions of these funds need to come from the public. It also raises the question of why crowdfunding has not been taken up by as many individual artists as they expected, pointing to unique challenges that they might have to face compared to other categories of theatre makers.

TABLE 1: The eight theatre projects which raised funds through NESTA match crowdfunding pilot.

Theatre Company	Type of project	Amount raised from online backers	No. of online backers	Funding matched by ACE	New stretch target on campaign page
A	Shakespeare adaptation (site-specific)	£7100	80	50% bridge	To pay for registering with ITC and to save towards a tour van
B	New historical musical	£4670	79	25% bridge	To fund the tour if did not obtain ACE funding
C	Children's devised puppetry show	£4000	75	25% bridge	£1000 to replace old tour van
D	New political-historical musical	£5060	41	25% bridge	None
E	New political-historical musical	£5000	51	25% bridge	Any donations over the £10,000 target will go towards touring
F	New immersive opera	£7405	78	25% top up	To pay young artists fair fees
G	Musical (American musical/transfer)	£5000	9	50% bridge	None
H	Youth Theatre	£9650	110	50% top up	£1500 to prove work is of high artistic quality

5.3 Data set from *crowdfunder.uk*

With the perimeter of the research set on the funding of theatre productions, campaigns other than for this purpose such as attending a residency or artistic training, paying for theatre venue refurbishment or purchase of auditorium furniture were excluded in this analysis. From this, a total of 402 theatre projects had campaigned between September 2011 and April 2018 on *crowdfunder.uk*, a UK operated donation-based model crowdfunding platform with the opportunity for eligible project creators to secure match funding through its local and regional partners. As the platform is specifically catered for project founders from the UK, this parameter did not require the filtering out of international projects from a large mix of projects on platforms like *kickstarter.com* and *indiegogo.com*. The data on crowdfunded theatre projects from *crowdfunder.uk* was extracted from its 'Film and Theatre' category, which had allowed for a number of pertinent observations. Firstly, the numbers of backers supporting theatre projects and the amount raised from these campaigns have been on an upward trend since its launch in 2011, peaking between 2015 and 2017 (see **TABLE 2**).

TABLE 2: Trends in online backing on *crowdfunder.uk* (September 2010 to April 2018)

Campaign Year	Number of Backers	Amount of funds raised	% of increase per year
2011	79	£3,555	
2012	216	£8,479	2.38%
2013	340	£ 20,506	2.42%
2014	560	£ 25,129	1.22%
2015	1616	£60,052	2.39%
2016	3767	£162,142	2.7%
2017*	3649	£142,245	0.88%
2018**	1247	£84,929	

* Refers to the year NESTA experimented with ACE's match crowdfunding scheme

**The number of backers and amount of funds raised shown here have excluded projects crowdfunded to finance the brick and mortar aspect and facilities for theatre venues. With the inclusion of these, the figures would be higher.

These figures reject the notion that crowdfunding had reached a saturation point after 2015 (Hui et al. 2014; Arganoff, 2012). However, a cross check with document analysis suggests that the significant increase of backers and funds may have been more likely to do with the appeal of NESTA's match crowdfunding scheme in partnership with ACE and the National Lottery, which had relaxed its application criteria from being opened only for individual artists to later being opened to arts organizations as well as the increase of 25% to 50% match fund offer (*Matching the Crowd Report*, 2017). The report detailed that 59 projects were funded from the scheme for both the arts and heritage, from which the exact number of theatre projects had been deduced. The number of theatre projects, their funders, and funding status at the start of the campaign is summarized below in **TABLE 3**.

TABLE 3: Number of theatre projects, their funders and funding status at the time of campaign on *crowdfunder.uk*

Funder	Status	Number of projects
ACE	Grant awarded	14
	Grant received for development stage	8
	Grant pending (match funding scheme)	17
	Grant application rejected	4
	Grant reduced	1
Local Councils	Grant awarded	6
	Recommendation for private support	1
Trusts	Funding received	5
	Pending application	2
Universities	Loan	29
	University Grant	
	Department Grant	
	Language Programme	
Businesses	In-kind support	1
	Sponsorship	4
	Subsidy	1
	In-kind support	2
Private funders	Donation	1
	Donation - pending	1
	In-kind support	1
Own investment		1
Theatres	In-kind	2
Ministry	Partnership/in-kind	1
Acting school		
College		
Director		
Venue		
Local crowdfund campaign		1
		2

Secondly, the data showed a similar geographic concentration on London, as displayed in an earlier observation of theatre projects campaigned on *kickstarter.com*. Of the 402 theatre projects campaigned on *crowdfunder.uk*, 124 were based in London. Proportionally fewer projects were based in cities like Edinburgh (38) and Manchester (25) where support for the arts and arts engagement were already higher than the rest of the UK (Langley, 2016; Harvie, 2013). This was followed by cities popular with annual entries to Edinburgh Fringe, which showed a similar spread of project location on *kickstarter.com*. Cities hosting annual theatre festivals and events like London (Camden Fringe), Edinburgh (Edinburgh Fringe) and Manchester (Manchester Theatre Festival) had demonstrated a larger number of projects than other cities. Between September 2011 and April 2018, project locations where theatre companies were based are listed in **TABLE 4**. In locations outside London, Edinburgh and Manchester, a large concentration of campaigns was theatre projects by universities students preparing to perform at fringes festivals. Hence, while they were based at their respective cities at the time of the campaign, the aim was to take their production beyond the cities where they had formed their theatre ensembles with fellow students.

Thirdly, original plays make up 192 of the total projects, followed by adaptations of modern and classic work. From 76 projects that received the higher-tier donations between £2000 and £15,517, an overwhelming majority were in fact new plays, followed by adaptations. Only 11 of these 76 were musicals, and even so the majority of these musical were new projects. Hence, an earlier inference on the rate of funding success being associated with known works rather than experimental new plays was not reflected in this data set. The support for new works that had superseded the musical genre appears to reject the tendency of

crowdfunding to gravitate towards the popular, the less risky cultural investments (Traverso and McCormick, 2017). With noticeable trend initiatives, this data further confirmed that the opposite was true, that online backers had largely donated for risk-taking new works instead of what was considered as popular works.

TABLE 4: Number of theatre projects according to the location of theatre makers as identified on the campaign pages on *crowdfunder.uk* between September 2011 and April 2018)

Rank	City/Region	Number of projects campaigned
1	London	124
2	Edinburgh	38
3	Manchester	25
4	Brighton	17
5	Exeter	16
6	Kent, Gillingham Canterbury	10 3
7	Liverpool	11
8	Birmingham Bristol Plymouth	10 10 10
9	York UK-tour	9 9
10	Oxford	7
11	Devon	5
12	Lincoln Sussex	4 4

From the campaign pages, it was noted that the support for theatre projects had a lot to do with how theatre makers were able to demonstrate the relevance for why the plays needed to be written and produced, their collective relevance as well as the immediacy of the issues to which theatre makers wished to draw attention. The

data illustrated an increasing number of theatre projects aimed at raising awareness and extending conversations on issues with regards to women (10), mental health (9), LGBTQ (6), bullying (2), refugees (4), obesity (1) and migration (1). This evidence from the platform pointed to a rise in socially engaged productions which might have reflected the shared motivations between theatre makers and their networks of backers, although other causes had to be taken into consideration such as the relationship between theatre makers and their backers, which could be the overriding factor for backers to help fund projects regardless of project type, genre or motivation. Moreover, a textual analysis lacks the ability to provide insight beyond the comparison of the size of backers (as a reflection of aggregated support) and the amount of funds they were able to contribute collectively to a project. Nevertheless, the inference from the number of backers and the amount raised for each project informed the average contribution per person, which in turn, allowed for a vague proposition to be made about the theatre makers' social and cultural capital. For example, the highest amount raised for a theatre project (£15,117) was by a Manchester-based group of theatre makers with a backer's average contribution of £258.61 per person, suggesting a connection with a network of wealthy backers who overall donated a high amount, or that a huge donation from few high net-worth backers had skewed the average significantly. In contrast (campaign strategy aside), the lowest amount raised, which was for a new comedy project based in Cornwall that ended with a mere £5 from a single backer suggests an almost non-existent social network or the incapacity for individuals related to the performer to contribute financially.

5.4 Campaign Extensions: New Stretch Targets

A striking trend on the *crowdfunder.uk* platform was the considerable number of theatre projects that had continued to seek donations with a new stretch target

strategy. These campaigns were usually extended not long after a previous funding target was achieved, with the hope of obtaining extra funds for items theatre makers did not raise in their earlier round of campaign. While previous monitoring of crowdfunding platforms elsewhere had not seen this approach by project makers to re-open their campaign calls unless by formally introducing it as the next stage of the project, on average, five projects per year (between 2014 to 2018) had returned to *crowdfunder.uk* platform to revise their initial funding target and solicited for additional funds, usually for purposes they did not state in their previous campaign round. Two types of funding stretches were evident. The first type was exemplified by a project which earlier campaign ended in 2016 but reappeared in 2018 to raise extra funds. The second type referred to projects, which increased their funding target after meeting their previous funding target either immediately within the campaign duration or shortly after the play had been performed. Projects of the second type formed almost a third of the total projects campaigned between 2014 to 2018, which prompted the justification for extended campaigns and its connection with the capacity for theatre makers to draw in more donations. An interview with a theatre maker who had asked for a new stretch target⁷⁰ revealed that it was a decision she had made to raise more by asking again. The response to her theatre project campaign had been positive as she managed to meet her funding target and received a matching fund from the match funding scheme; and although she was not sure if people would continue to give, her campaign later reached the new stretch target that saved the project from an essential logistic misfortune. This raised the question of who her backers were, and why had they agreed to donate knowing that she had successfully not only met her target but also received a match fund. All this points to the relationship

⁷⁰ *Tabatha*, an individual artist, is described in more detail in *Chapter 7*.

between the theatre maker and her supporters, in particular, the context of which they knew her, and what made her capable of obtaining such a high level of trust.

The pursuit of a new stretch target, however, was not evident in the first few years of the platform launch in 2011 but was a trend that had started to emerge since 2014. 65 theatre projects, which campaign ended between 2014 and 2016 had returned to extend their campaign and appealed to their network of backers for further support. Reasons for campaign extensions, as gathered from the campaign pages varied across projects, but can be categorized into these:

- i) enhancement of production quality such as the use of better-quality set, props, costumes and equipment
- ii) partial or full reimbursement of accommodation and travel costs
- iii) paying a minimum wage, fee or expenses for casts, crew and production team
- iv) touring costs, with the intention to take the play further and extend audience reach
- v) increasing publicity through marketing and promotion through greater online presence
- vi) obtaining professional services of filming, technical advice
- vii) engaging in post-production strategies with audience via workshops or resource packs and building partnership with schools or community as seed funding of future project development, including organizing event for funders
- viii) off-setting public funding previous funding shortage

Prior to this subsequent round of campaign, the appeal for funding had concentrated on production costs, with projects heading to various fringe festivals

as well as tours outside the locality that involved larger financial assistance for transportation, accommodation, registration, license, insurance and other expenses related to participation in such events. The return of project makers to re-activate their campaign pages did not seem like a full-scale campaign as their first but more of a persuasive plea to take the project to its next hurdle. From the remarks on the campaign pages, it appears that project makers did not expect to reach their campaign target sooner, or anticipate that people were more willing to help fund. The decision to extend the campaign has then allowed theatre makers to increase their target to what should have perhaps been 'a more realistic' budget for their respective projects. Thus, the time factor between the first campaign and the staging of the performance, coupled with the exceeded level of generosity received from backers, have given a window of opportunity for project makers to take a chance at raising extra funds.

Overall, campaign extensions have only seen a proportionally smaller contribution even if the earlier campaigns were successfully overfunded. This might have to do with most projects makers not stating clearly the exact amount needed. Aside from this, they were those who had asked for a far smaller amount, perhaps due to funding aspects of the production, which were deemed to be 'truly necessary' but as it turned out, was not enough to cover its cost. Unlike the urgent plea of the initial campaign, raising funds for the second time around for the same project was felt to be better left to the decision and generosity of backers themselves. In most 'successful' extended campaigns, funds collected merely exceeded the amount asked, while other second attempts mostly never made pass half the amount asked in the extended round. This observation signalled donor fatigue as seen in the diminishing success rate of subsequent crowdfunding campaigns and the over-reliance on donors. Hence, cases where subsequent campaigns had raised

equivalent or higher contributions than the earlier campaign, as well as the ability to persuade giving repeatedly suggests an inherent quality in the relationship between theatre makers and their backers which countered the assumptions about diminishing support after each campaign and donor fatigue.

5.5 In it for the Long Haul: Towards a Social Investment

While some extensions were meant to ease the cost generally needed for production, involving publicity and logistics, a large segment of project makers stretched their funding target to realize a larger potential beyond the current stage of the project. These project makers were keen to show how the stretched target would help the current projects with post-production activities, which might include outreach programmes and engagement activities beyond improvements to the performances themselves. This sharing of long-term goals and aspirations signals an attempt to get backers on board an extended journey with the project. Instead of a more common one-off call for funding, project makers were perhaps strategizing ways to involve backers for the long haul. Aside from this, projects with the next step planned ahead suggests a persistent effort to improve conditions socially, and such demonstration of will, marks a commitment to the project capable of drawing in backers' confidence. Thus, campaign extensions can play the role of reeling backers into making a social investment in the long run, perhaps in an attempt to initiate a more sustainable measure.

Campaign extensions question the interlocking social networks between theatre makers, backers and the role of other actors in connection to the project. Equally important is whether theatre makers are drawing on the same pool of funders who have continued to place their trust in them with the project they have earlier helped fund, thus, signifying a commitment of a shared socio-artistic journey. Possibly, it is

also an indication of project continuity that has increased in scale and ambition, along with the urgency and commitment to achieve its highest potential, and the feasibility of it going further if not for the initial financial contribution that provided a kickstart.

This funding direction towards the next stage of a particular work for the second time presents a contradiction to earlier studies of crowdfunding that noted lower success rate of repeat crowdfunding campaigns due to campaigners having exhausted their social networks in the first round and their own reluctance to be asking for fund again unless they are appealing to a different crowd of potential backers. This latest development in stretching the funding target from a lower funding target previously, is a possible indication that 'making the ask' has increasingly become normalized that it no longer carried the negative connotations it once had when projects are worth 'saving'. It brings to the surface the changing perception towards continuing projects as a long-term commitment, and consideration for the effort placed in quality work, especially if such projects include societal outreach agendas. Additionally, responses to new stretch targets have disputed the personal sense of indebtedness on the part of project creators, and their embarrassment of a second plea to be criticized as a lack of resourcefulness.

5.6 Forms of Co-Creation and Collaboration

The data revealed a number of co-creative and collaborative forms in the theatre projects campaigned, which reflected configurations of social capital network structures indicative of their potential support at different levels of social of capital. The structures found can be categorised as follows:

1) *Professionals working collectively to share and exchange expertise with each other*

This group denotes a highly bridged network of artists forming a collegial solidarity that invites a transformation of weak ties into strong ties. The merging of broad professional network with the vertical network structures of experts, suggests the inclination for this combination to draw in institutional support gathered from their established positions. With artists identifying strongly with other artists, in theory, the peer network collective will eventually become inward looking and insular as the bond among them strengthens, at the cost of the group potentially ignoring external actors that could bring them access to resources.

2) *Professional artists working together with aspiring young artists and youth actors*

Theoretically, this collaboration can expect strong support from the bonding social capital of families of the young participants in the group, as well as the bridging and linking social capital from families' and their connection with the larger community. With young artists as part of this configuration, it can expect donations from parents, immediate and extended kin on the basis of intergenerational reciprocity (for example, the experience of theatre that parents pass on to their children); and reverse reciprocity as a form of advance payment to reward the current work done for the younger generation which outcome may only be harvested in the future (when they have become productive adults). Along with the presence of both bridging and linking social capital at the familial and communal levels representing support from the grassroots, this project combination would also likely

benefit from vertical network through affiliations of the professional artists with institutions of their training, education, peer network partnerships.

3) *Amateurs seeking guidance from emerging and professional actors and creatives*

There is a potential bridging and linking social capital between non-experts and experts in this combination. Amateurs are capable of bringing with them resources external to the artistic circle, suggesting a heterogeneous mix of potential backers. In theory, this partnership has the capacity to draw highly on their community level social capital, depending on the demand or support that comes from the grassroots. The project sustainability may lie in the chain of reciprocities initiated from the amateurs to the actors, and from both to the community, then in return, from the community to both.

4) *Professionals researching with academics and charities*

This relationship signals a particularly strong bridging-linking social capital at institutional and community levels, respectively. In theory, this triad represents a highly vertical network structures signalling a strong chance for sustainability as support for the project can come from the larger resources of community and institutional social capital. This type of collaboration represents an ideal sustainable mix as seen in the combination of bottom-up and top-down network structures.

5) *Professionals collaborating with the local community to devise a performance.*

The strength of this type of project lies in its engagement with the grassroots. With the participation of locals in the area, artists are

simultaneously encouraging communities to feed into the production while building their community social capital with them. The active call to contribute to a local history often means a direct engagement in co-creation which depends highly on bridging social capital at the community level, requiring recollection of narratives, retelling of events, and reinterpretation of artefacts from older community members and leaders. This means concentrating inwards when it comes to the project's reliance on individuals' bonding social capital, and expanding outwards in creating room for dialogue with the broader bridging social capital when communities help piece parts of a story together. If materialized, the collaborative and cooperative elements in the making of the project would stand as a reflection of the community's strong grassroots support, and because of its highly collective and social links, its institutional relevance would potentially attract institutional funding.

This chapter has shown how the crowdfunding of theatre projects mimics traditional funding in terms of concentration of locations, which suggests that areas with a high population of artists where public funding has been distributed are also areas where artists have used crowdfunding. While there is an indication of an overlap where funding for the arts is needed, data from this platform also makes a revelation that contrasts with earlier assumptions about the crowd's decision to fund. Backers on *crowdfunder.uk* have donated on new works (such as experimental, avant-garde, devised) more than they have donated to popular works (such as musicals), which informs the research that the decision to donate is not determined simply by what is considered popular pieces. Instead, it suggests that other factors are at work, namely, support from bonding, bridging and linking social capital across varying degrees of horizontal and vertical network ties.

With the overview of crowdfunding theatre projects on the platform *crowdfunder.co.uk*, I now proceed to my empirical chapters, beginning with the case of graduate theatre companies.

Chapter 6

GRADUATE THEATRE COMPANIES

This chapter presents the interview findings of ten graduate theatre companies, and the follow-up interviews with five of them (see **TABLE 5**). It draws together the shared characteristics of their crowdfunding experience as well as the post-crowdfunding developments in their practice. Based on the thematic links gathered from their experience as new theatre companies, I outline how crowdfunding marks a significant milestone in the nascent stage of their existence by bringing along opportunities for branding and the introduction of the companies' ethos through project campaigns despite the structural barriers that largely disqualify them from public funding. I relate these as products of their universities with graduate theatre companies being a generation of digital natives who largely easily navigate the crowdfunding process, thereby presenting them with opportunities for reputation building. In the second half of the chapter, I identify their backers based on their levels of social capital. My research findings show the inclination for the majority of graduate theatre companies which had been overwhelmingly funded by networks of family and friends to be at a higher risk of stasis, while those acquiring community and institutional social capital were able to forge ahead.

TABLE 5: Crowdfunded projects of the ten graduate theatre companies examined

No.	Company	End of campaign date	Amount raised	Backers	Duration (days)	Project Type	Use of funds	Notes
1	BESPOKE	30/9/2017	£450 (40%) L: £5 H: £100	14	45	New immersive horror theatre	To cover production cost	Part of new theatre showcase festival. Supported partly by city council.
2	BLOOM!	3/5/2018	£2124 (60%) L: £3 H: £150	60	56	New physical theatre and clowning piece	To support a UK/European theatre festival tour	No institutional support at the time of crowdfunding.
3	DAPPER	6/11/2017	£580 (193%) L: £10 H: £100	20	49	New piece of theatre	To cover the costs of props, costumes and other materials New stretch target: to afford professional film-making company to record a trailer	Obtained a graduate entrepreneurial fund from the university. Has university support for use of rehearsal space and involvement for theatre module building.
		26/2/2020	£235 (27%) L: £5 H: £100	9	28	Newly developed piece of theatre	To pay collaborating artists	

No.	Company	End of campaign date	Amount raised	Backers	Duration (days)	Project Type	Use of funds	Notes
4	DUPLICATE	6/6/2017	£1245 (20%) L: £5 H: £1000	15	56	New children's puppetry play (debut)	To take the production to Edinburgh Fringe. Cost of props, costumes, puppets, materials, set, accommodation, travel.	Received funding from acting school and university, underwent mentorship with an acclaimed theatre company.
		17/4/2018	£920 (92%) L: £10 H: £200	22	56	New children's puppetry play (second production)	To develop the play. Cost of renting rehearsal spaces, sourcing of props and costumes, puppetry materials.	Has become an award-winning family theatre ensemble, known for a passion for puppetry, storytelling and movement with the aim to educate and inspire.
		29/5/2019	£800 (26%) L: £20 H: £200	17	70	New children's puppetry play (second production)	To take the production to Edinburgh Fringe.	
5	INTREPID	12/4/2018	£2250 (90%) L: £5 H: £200	58	35	New play, re-writing history from a female perspective	To take the production to Edinburgh Fringe. Cost of venue, fee, insurance, accommodation, travel, designing and printing of poster and flyers, building a website.	Female-led theatre company providing a platform for female creatives. No institutional funding at the time of crowdfunding.
		19/4/2019	£2881 (96%) L: £10 H: £201	50	41	Re-staging of previously written original play and a sister production		

No.	Company	End of campaign date	Amount raised	Backers	Duration (days)	Project Type	Use of funds	Notes
6	LOOPED	5/5/2017	£490 (81%) L:£5 H:£100	15	56	New female-led play, verbatim, physical, devised theatre	To cover costs of venue hire over 4 nights and promotion	No institutional funding at the time of crowdfunding.
7	SPEAK!	25/5/2016	£427 (28%) L:£2 H:£100	13	21	Physical comedy; Disabled and non-disabled integrated theatre company	To take the production to Brighton Fringe	In collaboration with a disability organization. Became winner of integrated fringe award. Supported 3 other university crowd-funded projects. No other institutional support at the time of crowdfunding.
8	SPOOFED	7/5/2016	£3205 (100%) L:£5 H:£200	68	28	Adaptation, fun and energetic ensemble piece of theatre for all ages	New stretch target: To go towards the next project	No institutional funding at the time of crowdfunding.
9	TALE-BEARERS	1/7/2015	£1324 (110%) L:N/A H:N/A	51		New interactive theatre to and excite non-theatre goers, and quash stigmas around participatory theatre	To fund for Camden Fringe and future venues, festivals, and fringes. To cover cost of equipment, rehearsal space and publicity.	No institutional support at the time of crowdfunding.

No.	Company	End of campaign date	Amount raised	Backers	Duration (days)	Project Type	Use of funds	Notes
10	WOWZER	31/7/2017	£367 (48%) L:£5 H:£50	16	35	New clowning, physical theatre and devised piece	To cover the costs of taking the show to Edinburgh Edinga which include registration, fee, props, costumes, marketing, materials, travel.	Obtained a university grant for interdisciplinary innovation.

6.1 Charting the Theatrical Milestones as Unlikely Public Funding Candidates

Graduate and student theatre companies formed the second largest number of theatre projects on *crowdfunder.uk*⁷¹, representing approximately a third of all theatre projects on the crowdfunding platform on a monthly average. The trends of almost a decade, from 2010 to 2018, show that the number of campaigns by graduate theatre companies would also rapidly increase in the months approaching the annual Edinburgh Festival Fringe held every August.

In this research, 'graduate theatre companies' refers to new companies set up by university students to begin their professional practice. At the time of their crowdfunding campaign, five of the graduate theatre companies interviewed were in their first year of operation, while the other five companies have operated for almost two years. Four out of ten of these companies were crowdfunding for their debut project, while six others crowdfunded for a later project. It became clear from the interviews that the crowdfunded projects were the more 'serious' projects with more time and energy devoted to researching, developing and refining, with plans to take the project on tour and ultimately, to qualify them for institutional funding. In other words, the crowdfunded projects tended to be their prized projects, which companies had planned to dedicate extensively with investment of resources that exceeded all previous projects. Unlike the crowdfunded projects, previous non-crowdfunded projects had been prepared within shorter durations, or commissioned for a specific event. This suggests the value that graduate theatre companies place on crowdfunded projects as being decidedly different from prior projects, marking an important milestone in their theatrical journey.

⁷¹ 167 projects, raising £133,849 from 3975 backers between September 2010 to April 2018

At the outset, crowdfunding presents new graduate theatre companies with the feasibility to mobilize monetary resources from their social contacts as a way to overcome financial limitations, despite traditional fundraising efforts. With limited social capital compared to their older and more established theatre counterparts, graduate theatre companies have resorted to a concoction of fundraising methods:

“We did crowdfunding but we also did fundraising concerts. We did a short run at a theatre that was pay-for-what-you-can-give. We didn’t have to pay for the theatre but we were making money, so that was pretty much how we paid for the project. Other than that, we also had everybody in the team on a profit share.”

- *INTREPID*

Additional methods have included organizing bake sales⁷², selling raffle tickets⁷³, selling tickets on scratch nights⁷⁴. To help finance their project, members in the company have also adopted approaches such as combining individual savings⁷⁵ and income from part-time wages⁷⁶, as well as opting for cash advances as credit cardholders⁷⁷, with the expectation of reimbursement through ticket sales. Being new in the industry, graduate theatre companies demonstrated sheer passion to bank on an idea by doing all that they possibly could, within their limited means, experience, and reputation to see their first major project through. Often, this display of willpower is part of their noticeable campaign narrative which backers recognized as the companies’ creative potential, capacity to contribute artistically, and ability to go far in the industry⁷⁸.

⁷² as done by *INTREPID*

⁷³ as done by *INTREPID*

⁷⁴ as done by *BLOOM!*, *DUPLICATE*, and *INTREPID*

⁷⁵ as done by *DUPLICATE*

⁷⁶ as done by *BLOOM!*

⁷⁷ as done by *TALEBEARERS*

⁷⁸ In its crowdfunding campaign, *BESPOKE* explained its “goal is to be an ethical company, treating those we work with well and creating work which highlights social issues we are passionate about”. With the same zest that drew the attention of backers, *INTREPID* described itself as a brand new company providing “a platform for brilliant female creatives to tell the stories of awesome women” and highlighting that despite the “wealth of female talent...somehow that is not being reflected in numbers”. Meanwhile, *DAPPER* made itself stand out by stating its focus on devising new work through the training ethos and aesthetics grounded in Meyerhold’s Theatrical Biomechanics. (crowdfunder.co.uk)

As new ventures straight out of university, graduate theatre makers face structural barriers, making them unlikely candidates for public funding consideration. Their lack of financial resources is a main barrier, as any theatre company applying for ACE is required to raise 10% upfront of the total amount of funding for which it wishes to apply⁷⁹. For example, an application for a £10,000 project grant would require that the company provide a financial proof of £1,000. Furthermore, in the application for project grants of more than £15,000, graduate theatre companies are even less likely to have the financial resilience to cope with the staggered funding release of 40%-50%-10% during the early-mid-end implementation phases of the project, which require theatre companies to be able to withstand intervals of funding release using their own funds first. The release of ACE funds at these respective stages in the making of a project where funding would only be released after each stage of project completion, has mostly allowed companies with stronger financial standing to afford such arrangements⁸⁰.

Where providing the financial proof was not an obstacle, the lack of experience in the industry would have prevented new graduate theatre companies from presenting evidence of their artistic merit and credibility, commonly evidenced through the interest and involvement of multiple partners⁸¹, accomplishments⁸², all of which demand that a substantial amount of time had been dedicated to this endeavour prior to funding application. Thus, in reality, a young theatre company would need the first few years to make a name for itself, gather its financial momentum, and build its artistic portfolio before it could compete for ACE funding alongside theatre companies more established than them. As ACE's funding

⁷⁹ as explained at 'ACE Funding Talk 'on 2 April 2019 organized by Coventry Artspace, information can also be found on <http://www.artscouncil.org>

⁸⁰ as explained at 'ACE Funding Talk 'on 2 April 2019 organized by Coventry Artspace, information can also be found on <http://www.artscouncil.org>

⁸¹ such as educational institutions, museums, libraries, and charities

⁸² such as fringe awards, best new work nominations, rave reviews, and media attention

selection is based on the calculation of risk, newer theatre companies would be at a disadvantage from the start, and perceived as riskier investments than the more established theatre companies whose past financial management, and records of artistic accomplishments would suggest a greater capacity to see through planned projects, and therefore, provide more assurance on the accountability of public money invested in them.

Another obstacle to public funding for graduate theatre companies is due to the nature of the projects, which, some of them have acknowledged from early on as projects that do not fall within the criteria for ACE funding. Knowing that their projects would not tick the boxes for ACE's funding eligibility, companies have shifted their focus on a funding mechanism that would allow them creative freedom, particularly when they could not see their work pinned down to existing institutional categories:

“There's very little (*funding*) we are eligible for, and because of the project, which is quite unique, not so much a clown show, it's a physical comedy, we can't attach it to 'mental health' or 'domestic violence', it brings joy to people but you can't get money from 'joy'.”

- *BLOOM!*

Other than ACE, trusts and foundations similarly set out their quest for specific advocacies that entail focussing on certain geographical locations or communities, and would therefore only support work aligned to these missions⁸³. The alignment to particular causes, however, have inherently excluded some early stage theatre companies whose immediate concern revolves around the kind of work that speaks of their artistry, beliefs and the direction they see themselves taking rather than allowing the preoccupation with funders' criteria dictate the kind of work they

⁸³ most evident with *DUPLICATE*

produce. The desire for autonomy and self-expression of many graduate theatre companies often means creating work which sits outside funders' criteria dedicated to its own aesthetics more than external 'controlling' influence. Hence, among the few options available is crowdfunding, which frees companies from any strings attached and the liberty to explore and create, particularly at an experimental stage of their existence. Thus, backing from crowdfunding functions to temporarily substitute conventional funding while graduate theatre companies grow and learn to manoeuvre their way in the industry, or until they arrive at a more qualified position for ACE funding considerations.

6.2 Digital Natives, the Enterprise Culture, and University Spin-off Companies

As 'so called' digital natives, building the company website, setting up crowdfunding campaigns, incorporating videos for promotional purposes, and updating their online followers on various social media are tasks graduate theatre companies are believed to engage more effortlessly than others. The demands of crowdfunding campaigns had not been an issue for graduate theatre makers, with them attending to these tasks on their own as a wholly D-I-Y endeavour. Because of their technical competence in navigating the crowdfunding platform, graduate theatre companies had saved on the expenses of paying someone else to create, publish and manage their crowdfunding campaign from start to finish. Additionally, none of the graduate theatre makers attended any crowdfunding workshops or talks, and had generally embrace crowdfunding as a fundraising opportunity that should be seized.

Growing up hearing the success stories of crowdfunding, the decision to crowdfund for graduate theatre companies was straightforward:

“We decided to crowdfund because we thought it was the easiest way, we felt it was the best way was to get crowdfunded.”

- *INTREPID*

Additionally, their ability to seamlessly employ social media optimization into their crowdfunding campaign has benefitted them well into the post-crowdfunding stage by continuing to inform the public about the journey of their achievements and commitment towards their aspirations. For most, their crowdfunding campaign has exceeded its function as an online fundraising tool into a marker of their milestone into the theatre industry.

The way crowdfunding is embedded into a company's social media optimization strategy has repercussions on how campaigns can direct potential backers to its website and consequently, draw them to become project backers, even if merely denoting their interest in the company by becoming its social media followers. The latter, however, does not suggest the ultimate decision to refuse backing but rather, a delay until more is known about the company and its commitment to its mission, dedication, and credibility, which can be gathered from the company's updates of reviews, interviews, awards attainment as well as exchanges and comments on its social media channels. More accurately, while a company may not obtain an immediate backer, it is not an entirely lost cause, since in time, followers are likely to become audience members and possibly track its future productions. Thus, a company's digital media prowess entails that information about its mission and activities has an extensive enough reach that its initial following is already part of its long-term audience development strategy while it stays closely to those who have already backed a previous production, and who are probably keen to continue backing for future productions.

As young and new theatre companies, crowdfunding is seen to indicate the effort devoted towards making their production a reality, aside from an avenue to publicize their accomplishment from the add-on value of social media optimization where multiple platforms such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram* and *YouTube* are linked. As seen in the crowdfunding experience of *INTREPID*, social media networking sites have been used for different purposes to address different demographics of supporters. *INTREPID*'s updates on *Facebook* have drawn more followers in the older age bracket while simultaneously functioning as an archive of the company's turning points, whereas its use of *Twitter* has been effective in updating its much younger followers when linking its projects to related causes, campaigns and social movements⁸⁴. Hence, social media optimization presents graduate theatre companies with the opportunity for audience development by building communities of followers, thereby contributing to the growth of their enterprise.

INTREPID, in particular, has been very clear about how crowdfunding has helped its production, mostly when it started performing at Edinburgh Fringe, and mainly because its *Instagram* posts and *Twitter* feeds have allowed its current and new followers to trace its activities back to its campaign page and company website. The network of artists and the audience who have come to watch its performances visited these later to learn more about the company and what it stands for. Through its social media feeds and tweets, some audience members have circulated the news of its performance at the fringe, which inadvertently invited those still at the fringe and the vicinity to come and watch the play while *INTREPID* was still performing. *INTREPID*'s online traffic was also drawn to its earlier self-funded musical with a ready crowd expressing their interest in its coming

⁸⁴ Most prominent in *BLOOM!*, *DUPLICATE*, and *INTREPID*.

production after seeing the show and learning about the company's advocacy for female representation in official history and in the theatre industry, specifically. The production received rave reviews, was nominated for a number of awards, and chosen as one of the top fringe picks at the festival. Consequently, *INTREPID*'s achievements received print, radio, and other media coverage, which was a huge accomplishment since the company was founded in less than a year. The crowd's interest in its work has largely sustained until the following year when *INTREPID* crowdfunded for the second time for a repeat production of the previous project in combination with a sister production, raising £2250 (96%) and £2881(90%) respectively. With its second crowdfunding campaign, *INTREPID* received repeat donations from fifteen backers (out of fifty in total) who had also donated to its first crowdfunding campaign, with three other frequent backers similarly donating to artistic projects for local causes. Hence, for *INTREPID*, its use of crowdfunding has gone beyond funding itself but also as one of its approaches to gain traction to its cause. Moreover, the positive responses to both of its crowdfunding campaigns are indicators confirming its choice of artistic direction and the future support of its projects.

For *WOWZER*, the funds raised from its crowdfunding campaign were meant as additional funding to supplement the new student performance fund it had earlier received from the university. Although the campaign only met 48% (£370) of its target funding, *WOWZER* learned that its crowdfunding support has extended offline, where it also received donations at the door while performing at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, which compensated for the month-long expenses at one of the most expensive cities to perform in Europe. Apparently, news about its crowdfunding campaign and performance at the fringe had earlier reached and therefore, motivated a larger number of supporters than those who had donated

through the platform. Although its official number of backers comprised of just sixteen people during the campaign, *WOWZER* managed to tap into an unlikely network of senior citizen aesthetes⁸⁵ who became its online followers outside the platform and bought tickets to see the show for further support⁸⁶.

Another unexpected outcome from *WOWZER*'s crowdfunding campaign happened in the earlier part of its fundraising plea when it received repeated donations from a musician in the US, offering to help with the composition of its theme song. This inter-continental, virtual collaboration worked out well for both parties, and was an experience *WOWZER* did not imagine happening when starting to crowdfund for its first project. The project ended with *WOWZER* being shortlisted with a national student drama festival award, which was again a pleasant surprise for the company. Overall, these series of serendipities in its crowdfunding campaign have given *WOWZER* some thoughts on collaborative partnerships, and how, for instance, the forte of its individual members could play in collective activism outside the company, including working with other young creatives from various disciplines in nurturing their long-term creative growth, where its members are working currently.

DUPLICATE's use of crowdfunding was meant to fund the research and development of its second project, following the success of its first project, which was listed as an award finalist, and a winner for another category at the Brighton Fringe Festival in the previous year. As *DUPLICATE* was taking a step further in its devising effort by experimenting with multiple techniques, funds raised from its crowdfunding campaign would give *DUPLICATE* some financial leeway in its use of rehearsal space and outsourcing the props needed for the play. Left to its own

⁸⁵ through a parent's social contact

⁸⁶ from my observation at the performance venue as an audience

limited financial means, it would have taken *DUPLICATE* a longer time to gather sufficient financial resources to pull the work through, delaying the play from coming together in time for its response to a call for submission to a national exchange programme involving international participation of young companies. Having secured a place largely owed to funds raised through crowdfunding, the company benefitted from sessions by established artists on creative learning explorations and new approaches to storytelling. This marks the beginning of *DUPLICATE*'s affiliation with an institution outside the university that later helped substantiate its application for a mentoring programme, and a working visit to an international theatre festival. Hence, while raising funds through crowdfunding allowed *DUPLICATE* to supplement the cost of devising a new play, in reality, it represented part of a bigger scheme that laid the foundation for access to opportunities beyond fundraising itself such as the possibilities of being commissioned, mentored, and affiliated with reputable institutions in the field.

Another identifiable upside for graduate theatre makers lies in them growing up with the arrival of the crowdfunding scene, as a subset of the larger platform economy that also intersects with the normalization of entrepreneurship immersed in the stewardship and agential role of the university beyond knowledge transfer, onto its link to the real world. Such connection is coordinated in the triple helix model of 'university-industry-government' ecology (Peris-Ortiz et. al, 2016), later extended as the multiple helix model of 'university-industry-government-community' ecology (Stagars, 2015), which recognizes the larger interconnectivity of capitals. Since neither the triple nor the multiple helixes is the prerogative support system of every university, the arrival of crowdfunding to the scene, however, has placed the university as an agency to resource mobilization through its reputation, against the broader interconnecting networks of the industry,

government, and community. Thus, although the intention of using crowdfunding is to secure an amount of fund for their production, graduate theatre companies are also well aware of the possibly greater, and more lasting potential (such as developing a profile, building a community of followers, attracting potential collaborators) access to expansive networks from the affiliation with their university.

As an incubator of cognitive capital, the university has traditionally been a hub for like-minded individuals to implement ideas and put innovation into practice, hence, the birth of student companies as spill overs from their university education is often the result of their environmental conditioning⁸⁷. It is no coincidence then that graduate theatre companies are usually founded among university course mates, or even course alumni from different graduating years. From the interviews, all the ten graduate theatre companies were originally founded by former students of the same university, although one company has later proceeded to recruit extra members as associates and freelancers as part of their expansion plan. Therefore, having studied at the same university has a way of uniting and setting graduates steadfastly on their collective venture, which alliance can be strategic in their application for funding, grants or entrepreneurial schemes from establishments where such opportunities are available. The interviews gathered that graduate theatre companies have capitalized on their alliance with their university⁸⁸ to be greatly recognized for their academic and artistic tutelage but likewise, their association with the local community can also further enhance a university's reputation as strategic co-branding that boosts the image of both collaborators.

⁸⁷ such as research interest, field specialization, industry links, and career support system

⁸⁸ This comes on very strongly with *BLOOM!*, *DAPPER*, and *DUPLICATE*.

With the arrival of the crowdfunding scene which intersects with the normalization of entrepreneurship, it seems that the role of the university has been elevated from a locus of knowledge transfer to a stewardship and agential role of linking graduate companies to the real world. Thus, as expounded in the triple and multiple helix models, university spin-off companies can benefit both directly and indirectly from the institutional capital of their universities which have roles to play in the larger ecosystemic relations mobilizing the community, industry and the government. For instance, *BLOOM!*'s former training from a prestigious European art school allows it to gather supporters from individuals who recognize its international standing in the field of physical theatre and mime, as with *BESPOKE*'s background as students of theatre in the city university which had eased the local council and tourism board to collaboratively embark on its site-specific performance project at neglected historical edifices as part of the City of Culture agenda. Similarly, *INTREPID*'s education and training from a world-leading performing arts university allows its counter-history project to quickly gain momentum when they performed at a very timely moment at a home event in response to a current media controversy then.

Besides the difference in universities' institutional links that denotes the presence or absence of partnerships with the government and industry, support for graduating students has also varied among departments based on funding allocations and research priorities. To illustrate, *DAPPER* applied and received a graduate award of £1000 which provided it the financial support to start the company and pursue the research and development of its major project, whilst also benefiting from the free use of rehearsal space in a multi-disciplinary shared media hub built to stimulate the growth of creative industries in the region. In another scenario, *WOWZER* applied for a student innovative performance grant

and was awarded funding by the interdisciplinary institute of its university. The grant application, which was endorsed by its course tutor, has helped in subsidizing a significant portion of the company's expenses for its debut performance at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Meanwhile, *DUPLICATE*'s successful application for its university's graduate award gave it some leverage in making its first project as a company, and in turn garnered it a number of awards in a fringe festival that consequently enabled it to secure a commission for its next project. For these companies, the financial support from their university at an early stage gave them an edge over other new companies, particularly in having the assurance that their work could receive the dedication it deserves, and the affordance to concentrate on the production without shouldering the whole weight of financing on their own.

While a few universities were able to offer financial assistance, all of them, however, had waived fees for the use of rehearsal and performance spaces for their graduates, which were reciprocated in-kind with the running of student performance workshops and post-talk discussions for current students. To exemplify, five out of the ten graduate theatre companies interviewed have been invited to their respective universities for theatre festivals. Three of them have returned more than once for the same event in different years. Aside from discussions about their production with the current students, questions on their experience of running a company were inevitably part of the conversation. In the spirit of the festival, *DAPPER*'s return to the university's ground was coordinated to coincide with the welcoming week of new student registration, and tailored to a module for student's coursework which allowed new students to see for themselves the product of the university while keeping the alumni relevant and empowered through their continuous involvement with the university and the

faculty. *BESPOKE*, *DUPLICATE* and *TALEBEARERS* have all returned to perform at their university grounds, and although their productions were not specially tailored to a specific module like the experience of *DAPPER*, they have similarly conducted sessions for the current undergraduates. From their return to the alma mater, students have persuaded *BESPOKE* to run further sharing sessions, and auditioned for the acting positions for *DUPLICATE*'s new production.

Where support from the larger university administration was present, as demonstrated through the case of *DAPPER*, the role of faculty members has been particularly beneficial in linking professional contacts to graduates aspiring to run a theatre company from their undergraduate years. By the time the company advanced from its gestation stage, its affiliation with a few names in the local theatre scene has given it a head start, which visibility has later helped them secure a showcase opportunity alongside other industry newcomers. Three smaller projects⁸⁹ and one crowdfunded project later, *DAPPER* has been able to invest a couple more years of further work on its crowdfunded project with a long-term preparation for a tour as members are still managing their individual artistic calling. *DAPPER*'s capacity to take its research further while simultaneously enjoying the freedom of individual artistic exploration was owed largely to the university faculty's commitment to work in sync with the company's initial attainment of the graduate scheme. With faculty support and coursework module coordination, audience attendance at *DAPPER*'s performances had consistently been high, made convenient by the studio at the university's interdisciplinary hub for media, creative industries, and entrepreneurship. Together, these factors have contributed to its reputation as a homegrown newcomer, with the university as its

⁸⁹ one of which was commissioned

major institutional link to other layers of networks. For *DAPPER*, its university's assistance has been invaluable:

“...we wouldn't have gone for it if they had not continued to support us. The grant that we got is a lot less valuable than the rehearsal space of £200 a day...for the amount of time we've used it, we've used it for more”

– *DAPPER*

While its performances have attracted mostly students from the faculty, they had also attracted students from other departments, family members, aesthetes from the local industries, including audience members with associative links to the university.

While some universities have offered funding opportunities for their graduating students to start a company, or to fund the research and development stage of their project, others have not been as fortunate to benefit from the financial support and/or mentoring at a very crucial stage of their operation. Working entirely on its own, *BESPOKE* self-funded its first site-specific project, followed by a second project which it then crowdfunded. Its crowdfunded project, which was in line with the policy of the local authority, landed *BESPOKE* a discussion into how both parties could take the project further through their partnership. Since then, *BESPOKE* had created its third project, again as a self-funded endeavour. Despite the requests to continue performing, the university's indifference to entrepreneurial mentorship, including the oversight of not seeing *BESPOKE* as a professional graduate theatre company⁹⁰, factors such as overworking and marketing glitches have eventually led to a massive strain that gradually pressed *BESPOKE* to go on a hiatus after almost three years of operation:

“It just got to the point where I don't want to spend the money that I don't have and go through all the emotional and physical turmoil of

⁹⁰ regardless of its effort to perform and run workshops

it for it to not amount to anything...we know it works and that we can pretty much come back anytime...just that this isn't the right time to do it."

- *BESPOKE*

Looking back, *BESPOKE* said it had made many mistakes as a new company, which it could have avoided with guidance from the university. The mentoring role to new graduate companies like *BESPOKE* would have been extremely useful in its early years, but instead, having to manage all on its own, the lack of institutional support had contributed to its premature burn out. Thus, a more graduate-friendly arrangement, could have assisted new theatre companies in surviving the early years of operation and helped prevent an early demise. There has yet been any news of *BESPOKE* reconvening from the overwhelming back-to-back projects permitting only brief lapses in between despite its ability to remain largely independent and persistently industrious. The absence of support beyond its own monetary reserves has shown how its effort has been cut short.

As the cases above demonstrated, producing work of artistic merit needs to go hand-in-hand with industry mediators if graduate theatre companies were to be given a chance to advance beyond their nascent stage. Industry connections facilitated by faculty members who are/were themselves practitioners, and university backing of graduate companies especially in the cultural entrepreneurship aspect of their venture are particularly valuable. Additionally, efforts to continue involving former students by embedding their work into relevant coursework and university events or festivals, have a way of keeping the relationship reciprocal while prolonging the survival of these companies in an endeavour that demands artistic excellence without financial return until companies become more self-sustaining.

The interviews gathered that while some students have enrolled at university with the aim of running a theatre company⁹¹, the prospect of setting one up becomes increasingly a matter for discussion towards their degree course completion⁹². Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the crowdfunded productions by the graduate theatre companies interviewed have largely stemmed from modules involving group projects for which students had been required to devise and perform. Five of the ensembles were in fact formed during their final year assessment, with their future productions benefitting from formal assessments and peer feedback. To illustrate, the first production of *BLOOM!*, *DUPLICATE*, *DAPPER*, *TALEBEARERS*, and *WOWZER* were spin-offs of their final year project. Quite similarly, the experience of working on the same project had steered *BESPOKE*, *DAPPER*, and *INTREPID* to seriously consider their match as company members, and the kind of work they could see themselves making together. Hence, crowdfunded projects of graduate theatre companies have been based on a sustained alliance, which eventually led to projects being revisited for performances at fringe festivals⁹³, tours⁹⁴, private gigs⁹⁵, and the invitation to return and perform at their former educational institutions⁹⁶.

While five companies have worked on a new project as a direct outcome of their artistic alliance rather than a spin off of a previous student project, only one company was founded by graduates who have worked together in club projects rather than for a course work and taken the directorial lead in working with a few locally based young theatre makers as they acquired technical support⁹⁷. Hence, while not all graduate theatre companies are university spillovers born out of final

⁹¹ in the case of *BESPOKE*, *DUPLICATE*, *INTREPID*, *BLOOM!*, *DAPPER*

⁹² in the case of *WOWZER*, *TALEBEARERS*

⁹³ in the case of *BLOOM!*, *DAPPER*, *DUPLICATE*, *TALEBEARERS*, and *WOWZER*

⁹⁴ in the case of *BLOOM!*, *TALEBEARERS*

⁹⁵ in the case of *BLOOM!*, *INTREPID*

⁹⁶ in the case of *BESPOKE*, *DUPLICATE*, and *TALEBEARERS*

⁹⁷ as experienced by *BESPOKE*

year projects, their founding members are most certainly university alumni with a shared history of their educational and social experience of the same alma mater. To illustrate, *BLOOM!* was formed in its final year of graduating from a renowned school for physical theatre, miming and clowning. During their training, members discovered their chemistry of working together, having a shared outlook of making work that brings joy to people, and the persistence to take their work as far and as long as possible to their countries of origin. The company of three had quickly raised the capital towards their local and international tours by taking up multiple part-time jobs and gigs as well as by conducting workshops. Having considered the logistics and the practicality of working together, they decided to live together in a city with a busy cultural scene but one that could still provide them the affordability and flexibility to function on restricted income. They found a warehouse they could use for devising and rehearsing at a bargain rate, and while working on their project and holding multiple jobs in the city, managed to accumulate contacts of artists in the local network and nearby London. Thus, before the company crowdfunded its project, it was already able to book its touring venues in and around the cultural district of London while benefitting from invitations to European fringe festivals where fellow graduates are based. Together with the local contacts of its members, within two years, *BLOOM!* has managed to perform at Nordic and Australian fringe festivals, fulfilling most of its strategic planning, which it had set prior to its crowdfunding campaign. Its members' formal training at an internationally reputable school is one of *BLOOM!*'s unique selling points, its institutional capital that draws trust into their artistic endeavour, providing a branding endorsement that has partly led to the invitations to perform at international fringe festivals. Since performing at more than five fringe festivals across the world in under three years is by no means a normal feat, *BLOOM!*'s venture as a spin off project has kept it focussed and committed to its collective

aim stemming from a shared educational belonging, a team-philosophy of “bringing joy to people”, affording the company a horizontal leadership that allows it to work faster towards common goals.

With a shared artistic mission to challenge conventional history, members of *INTREPID* founded their company while still at the university. While staying true to the philosophy in consideration of how their post-university journey should proceed, its founding members had collectively agreed to retain the freedom of pursuing individual artistic interest for half of the year and dedicate the other half to team pursuits. By allocating roles in the company based on complementary skill sets, *INTREPID* is counting on working independently while working towards eligibility for public funding once it has the accomplishments to prove itself. In the meantime, the company overcame funding concerns by organizing various fundraising events for its first production that later gave it the foundation to proceed with the crowdfunding of its second project, which had also been supplemented by its own fundraising activities. It raised enough from its crowdfunded campaign to take the production to Edinburgh Festival Fringe where talks on collaboration with the heritage council and interested third parties as well as invitations to perform within both the public and private settings emerged. Hence, the leadership of remote managing has so far worked for *INTREPID*, who has recently crowdfunded for the second time for its third major project after reconvening from individual contractual jobs from different parts of the world. As fellow graduates with shared responsibility, this dual undertaking has been eased by their affiliation with the university, which reputable status in the industry *INTREPID* feels honoured to live up to.

As for *BESPOKE*, the experience of working together and knowing each other's common quirks over campus social events later made them founding members. While a member finished her studies, the earlier graduating partner gone to work with a few local theatre companies. A few years later, their productions have engaged local actors from the local university who have also performed at the local theatres. The combination of direct university graduates with performers from vocational training as well as a member's early participation in the local youth theatre members have added a community link to the company which would have otherwise consisted of solely university-trained theatre makers with a limited network in the local scene. The company had since developed and performed three plays, out of which, its instrumentally driven second project was crowdfunded with the support from local institutional collaborators.

As seen from the cases, while shared artistic interests and mutual professional goals are the initial drivers for setting up a theatre company together, these early years simultaneously function as a phase of exploration and experimentation, which includes learning from established and reputable theatre companies in the industry. With the desire to grow a company as they develop their personal artistic repertoires, members have undertaken national and international touring jobs among other work attachments, considering the importance of professional experience in becoming full-fledged theatre makers. Among the graduate theatre companies examined, juggling these pursuits meant coming to a collective agreement on the intervals in a year where members would be away to pursue personal career goals, and the months, which would be dedicated to the company's project, otherwise, a combination of flexible work arrangements that

can accommodate both aspects of growth⁹⁸. Since pursuing theatrical careers outside their own company benefits the company through the institutional validation and affiliation with established names in the industry, members' agreement on such autonomy can prove advantageous as they build their company along the way.

6.3 Branding, Ethos, and Making it to the Fringe

In the early stages of collaborating as ensembles, building the company profile play an important role in defining themselves as professional theatre makers. Crowdfunding for their project, therefore, represented an important milestone for graduate theatre makers to register their presence in the industry, and a chance to develop a following for the work they produced:

“...aside from helping us with the money, it helped us build our brand and build our name...and put our content out there...a kind of starting point to get us to that point that helps us build a community”

- *INTREPID*

Thus, aside from financing their theatre project, nascent graduate theatre companies have set out to use crowdfunding as means to propel their position from newcomers to emerging names in the larger artistic community. At this stage, the immediate concerns of new theatre companies are heavily invested in the type of work and ethos that identify them as the kind of theatre makers they want to be recognized:

“Crowdfunding helped in putting ourselves out there, while Edinburgh (*Fringe*) is about our work, the crowdfunding is about our idea, a kind of our remit, where we are at as a company.”

- *INTREPID*

⁹⁸ in the case of *INTREPID* and *DAPPER*

Hence, the freedom to experiment with methods and/or different treatment of subject matter, overrides other concerns in establishing their artistic calling. With focus and interest locked on charting the milestones that identifies their work as uniquely theirs, this stage presents graduate theatre companies with the task dedicated to branding. The immediate outcome that crowdfunding seemed to have allowed the interviewees was the signalling of their arrival in the industry as emerging theatre makers, alongside the invitation to acknowledge their artistic vision and creativity. As graduate theatre companies lack the communal relationship by dint of being young and new, their crowdfunding campaigns facilitate a virtual meeting point where they expand online communal connections from existing offline connections, and its potential to reach a wider population of prospective backers and audience members. Hence, the focus of graduate theatre companies at this particular stage of their existence have mainly been about maximizing exposure by building a community of followers and drawing as much interest to their work whilst being pragmatic about not being able to pay themselves yet. All effort up to this point has been about setting a firm ground and foundation from which their companies could grow in the coming years.

Nevertheless, defining the company has sometimes manifested in aligning itself with specific artistic strands, operating within a particular technical or methodological domain, underlined by their collective philosophy. To establish a distinct profile, new graduate theatre companies would find themselves compelled to offer a new theatrical experience (as their unique selling point) beyond existing theatrical offering. This is where their cognitive social capital plays a role in shaping the aesthetics they pursue which characterizes their work. In aspiring towards artistic excellence, there is a strong inclination among new graduate theatre makers to experiment and engage in ground-breaking work that may

appeal more to fellow aesthetes than communities targeted by public funders, at the price of losing out on institutional support. The outcome of this standpoint is evident in the post-crowdfunding stage among those interviewed whereby projects with closer adherence to the public funder formula of meeting certain social aims or being able to engage the public more accessibly are projects which have successfully obtained paid invitations to fringe festivals⁹⁹, opportunities to work in partnership with institutions¹⁰⁰, offered travel bursary/mobility fund¹⁰¹, and have even returned to crowdfund for the second time within a short year of their first crowdfunding campaign. Furthermore, graduate theatre companies which have proactively developed new and multiple networks of social ties across different levels of social capital while re-connecting older networks in their first crowdfunding campaign showed a noticeably productive phase in the crowdfunding aftermath¹⁰². Hence, dedication to intrinsic art without the support system of a heterogeneous network of social capital has the ability to stall graduate theatre companies in their early years of operation from progressing towards opportunities that draw them closer to public funding. This relative freedom that crowdfunding allows, however, may be two-fold. While crowdfunding is able to fill in this temporary funding gap, it might be harder for companies to step up to more policy-driven institutional funding later on.

The interviews gathered that nine out of the ten cases had crowdfunded to take their project to fringe festivals¹⁰³. Apart from this, their crowdfunding campaign is dedicated to the research and development costs of their theatre project, and this almost always led them to eventually participate in fringe festivals. Dubbed the

⁹⁹ as experienced by *BLOOM!*

¹⁰⁰ as experienced by *DUPLICATE*, *INTREPID*, and *TALEBEARERS*

¹⁰¹ as experienced by *DUPLICATE* and *TALEBEARERS*

¹⁰² in the case of *DUPLICATE* and *INTREPID*

¹⁰³ as illustrated by *BESPOKE*, *BLOOM!*, *DAPPER*, *DUPLICATE*, *INTREPID*, *LOOPED*, *SPOOFED*, *TALEBEARERS*, and *WOWZER*.

biggest international gathering of performers pioneering an egalitarian cultural event in Europe since 1942, performing at Edinburgh Fringe Festival has been the immediate aim of many graduate theatre companies for the number of possibilities that a mass congregation of art lovers can bring to their new venture. For these young artists, being able to perform there marks a significant milestone in their theatrical career and stands for their commitment to producing new work, which together brings the opportunity to be taken seriously as respectable theatre makers in the larger theatre landscape¹⁰⁴. Sharing an egalitarian stage with reputable and emerging names in the industry places graduate theatre companies in a community of artists with a shared endorsement of the fringe philosophy¹⁰⁵, which platform for creative freedom gives everyone the “opportunity to express themselves through creativity and experience the thrill of live performance”^{106 107}. The Fringe has since stood for the widening of access to the arts, as a space where culture is contested over its role, meaning and place in the society, with a larger, persisting aim of mediating social change (Barties, 2014:7). Running for three weeks annually in the summer, festivals like the Edinburgh Fringe provide the opportunity for student productions to perform outside their academic term time where many graduate theatre makers have participated as audience and volunteered before returning as performers themselves¹⁰⁸. The variety of performances offering not only trigger ideas that can feed back into their own

¹⁰⁴ All the ten graduate theatre companies developed new productions to fringe festivals, as with the majority of crowdfunding on crowdfunder.co.uk, whose purpose were to participate in fringe festivals, namely the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

¹⁰⁵ Theatre makers participating in the festival aspire to live up to the acronym’s blueprint as standing for Freedom, being Risk-taking artists, being part of an International showcase, indulging in the Nonsensical, breaking new artistic Grounds; all in the city of Edinburgh. The Edinburgh Fringe Festival Blueprint’. (www.edfringe.com)

¹⁰⁶ ‘The Edinburgh Fringe Festival Blueprint’. (www.edfringe.com)

¹⁰⁷ As a festival born out of elite counterculture, performing at Edinburgh Fringe Festival and its variants in other major cities denotes a commonality in democratic cultural participation subverting the earlier invitation-only performances of high-brow art. This adherence to a limited conception of cultural production privileging elitist forms of art (for example, opera and ballet) concentrated in metropolitan cities, which continued to be given funding priority by ACE was met with the double arm’s length position of the Scottish Arts Council¹⁰⁷. The independence of the latter presented an opportunity to wage a cultural war against a highly hierarchical cultural landscape thereby shifting opinions into “a more diverse, inclusive and flexible conception of culture” (Bartie, 2014:224).

¹⁰⁸ All members of the 10 graduate theatre companies interviewed have had previous and current engagement with the fringe festival before performing there themselves.

shows but also presents opportunities for camaraderie with like-minded individuals¹⁰⁹.

In the spirit of the Fringe, other cities like Manchester and Brighton have organized similar festivals where the landscapes become battlegrounds for the conflicting forces of social change¹¹⁰. Elsewhere, fringe festivals have continued to uphold inclusive participation of performers and audience, through a flexible conception of culture, and encouragement in creative innovation particularly among younger generations. Thus, performances at the fringe have become synonymous with an experimental approach to the arts where pollination across forms, content and methodologies are central to developing new work. It is this ethos of innovative offering, compounded by the democratic cultural participation of fringe festivals that motivate new artists to test their work at such events by making work that defines them and speaks for what they represent.

For others, participation in fringe festivals is influenced more by pragmatic¹¹¹ and strategic¹¹² reasons such as distance more than creating a “buzz” at larger events by focussing instead on local artistic networks and neighbouring art communities. However, while the success of a graduate theatre company cannot be measured by its participation in fringe festivals alone, the ability to participate in more fringe festivals as a strategic plan reflects a company’s capacity to mobilize and sustain funds while simultaneously drawing increasing attention to its artistic work. It also helps that these acclaimed events abound with opportunities to make an

¹⁰⁹ This has been the experience of *DAPPER*, *DUPLICATE*, and *WOWZER*.

¹¹⁰ Bartie (2014:7) quoted Robert Hewison in his conception of the arts as ‘a battleground for the conflicting forces of social change’.

¹¹¹ such as financial, logistic, and scheduling

¹¹² such as networking

impression and form partnerships, which can be profoundly beneficial for a starting enterprise.

Straight out of university the same year they crowdfunded, *INTREPID* and *WOWZER* were able to gather the support and momentum for their crowdfunded campaign for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. After its stint there, *WOWZER* did not have any concrete plans on the direction the company would undertake next despite receiving a grant from its former university to subsidize its trip and expenses while in Edinburgh. It was mainly eager to share its quirky original play there, experience the joy of performing to different crowds, and being part of a season of an extensive showcase with other emerging theatre makers. The opportunity to perform there has since been the most memorable milestone for the company. Similarly, *INTREPID* was keen to perform at Edinburgh Fringe immediately after graduation, and had started its crowdfunding campaign to help fund its participation. However, from the feedback on the production it received and opportunities to network with possible collaborators, it did not take long for *INTREPID* to plan for its return to Edinburgh Fringe Festival with an additional production in the following year. These visits have since been its highpoints since the company was founded two years ago.

Nevertheless, other graduate theatre companies have taken a more calculated risk on taking their production to Edinburgh Fringe Festival weighing heavily on their stock of financial resources against meeting the expected outcomes by considering other opportunities at lesser costs. To illustrate, *TALEBEARERS'* participation in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival was an ambition scaffolded over a series of performances by the time its members graduated. The subject of its first production, which was extremely apt when it was performed at the university, had

led to an invitation to perform at an independent factory supporting young companies in the creative industries. Following the response to its London tour after being given the opportunity to work alongside other creatives, *TALEBEARERS* was ready to take the momentum further by participating in the Camden Fringe in anticipation of bigger events in the coming years. Hence, despite the mania of Edinburgh Fringe Festival, *TALEBEARERS* started with Camden Fringe for practical and financial reasons as it was more centrally located, and where most of its supporters were based, making it a more sensible choice for its founding members to re-group from their UK-Europe work-based commitments as it already possessed its London connections to arrange venues and rehearsal hires. The experience gave *TALEBEARERS* the exposure and time it needed to gather the necessary financial resources from its box office ticket sales for participation in Edinburgh Fringe several months later. In between the fringe festivals, *TALEBEARERS* performed at pub theatres for almost two weeks, and having gathered reviews and media coverage of its performances ahead of the Edinburgh Fringe gave *TALEBEARERS* some leverage before arrival. Gradually, the build-up of positive responses to the production secured *TALEBEARERS* sold out performances which was quite rare for a new theatre company, including becoming the topic of study by a performing arts school, and an invitation to return to London for a homecoming performance at a creative hub for emerging and established artists.

In another case, the time frame on research and development, technical application, funding considerations within the crowdfunding year, and strategic connections with the artistic community in the nearest regional capital led *DAPPER* to concentrate on preparing for its performance at Manchester Fringe instead of the much-acclaimed Edinburgh Fringe. From its performance at Manchester

Fringe, *DAPPER* made the conscious effort to gather the response of audience members, fellow actors and producers, while it was also reviewed by fringe critics and journalists whose feedback contributed to the company being able to assess its first full length play. With *DAPPER*'s previous productions being experimentally varied monologue series with cinematography, street site-specific movement, radio drama, music-imagery-extended physicality fusion, and a reaction devised piece, its participation in the Manchester Fringe was crucial to its growth as a locally-based company keen to develop its audience membership, and nurturing its artistic connections across the northern region. Its participation has given a chance for a homegrown company to be known for its versatility across genres, methods, subjects and techniques, to gather local support and further prepare for tours outside Manchester.

At the current stage of their enterprise, the objective of most graduate theatre companies is to eventually take their productions to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, as the centre of all fringe festivals in the UK. Performing at the fringe is almost seen equivalent to a rite of passage, which new companies pursue to feel part of the larger theatre community, and simultaneously a quest for symbolic acceptance to its fraternity. As gathered from the interviews, graduate theatre companies which have not performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, are merely putting this dream on hold until a better financial position permits them to do so.

6.4 Backers of Theatre Projects by Graduate Theatre Companies

The formation of graduate theatre companies by a larger number of founding members would likely indicate that their combined social network is greater than companies with fewer founding members, as well as with companies which either by chance or by design are made up of individuals from different backgrounds or

countries of origin against members whose backgrounds are more homogenous. With a more heterogeneous mix of members originating from different cities, regions, and countries, a company is capable of drawing support from a similarly heterogeneous network of backers. Nevertheless, because of their lack of experience in the industry and general life-work engagement, their networks tend to be fragile and underdeveloped. Hence, graduate theatre companies tend to have the narrowest spread of backers for being young artists who are new to the industry with social capital mostly concentrating on families and friends, and rarely from the wider community members and institutions other than their affiliations with their alma mater and companies that they have worked for outside of their own. While receiving institutional support is the ultimate aim of graduate theatre companies, they are however at the stage where a great amount of attention is dedicated building their own artistic profile. Thus, at their current stage, the network structure for most graduate theatre companies is more horizontal than vertical, exhibiting a largely bonding-bridging social capital. While few companies have participated in programmes and events run by organizations with which they have had no prior relations (thus, facilitating their linking social capital), for the majority, opportunities for network brokerage have only become available after performing at fringe festivals, and actively seeking strategic local and international connections from improved visibility.

6.4.1 Family Capital

Family members are graduate theatre makers' biggest source of affective capital although not the biggest financial contributor to their crowdfunding campaign. Only about a quarter of the graduate theatre companies interviewed were considerably backed by family members while others have benefitted instead from their network

of friends. Generally, the family support for these young theatre makers in chasing their dreams is expressed with much warmth and encouragement¹¹³.

In the family network, bigger donations tend to come from extended family members like grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins, rather than the immediate parental or sibling connections. Hence, inter-generational social capital tends to gather more outside the nuclear family and exists largely outside first-degree relations. Even when the amount of donations is concerned, more have come from wealthy grandmothers or aunts rather than graduates' own parents¹¹⁴. Immediate family members, however, are more than likely to attend the performances and be their biggest supporters among audience members, aside from actively sharing the campaign links to their network of friends and acquaintances, which often results in nostalgia-based donations. Nostalgic giving, as I would term it, is exemplified in donations from older family friends who knew the theatre makers since they were little. Other than financial contribution, parents have played the role of intermediaries in helping their children connect with individuals in their friendship and associative circle, whom they think would be keen to support artistic endeavours, and more likely to attend the performance¹¹⁵. By spreading the word around, families help to promote the play by boosting ticket sales, increasing after-show donations, and channelling audience feedback to the company. Thus, by

¹¹³ Some of the messages left by family members to graduate theatre makers read: "We support you all the way!! Wishing you all the success and best reviews for Fringe Take 2 xx" (for *DUPLICATE*, on 8/3/2019); "All the best to your run at the fringe !! If I can help in anyway do let me know ! [...] All the best can't wait to see both shows !! (for *INTREPID*, on 19/4/2019).

¹¹⁴ When asked about donations from families, a member of *BLOOM!* pointed to another member during an interview: "He has a very rich grandmother, so, that helps." *WOWZER* also mentioned that one of its biggest donors is a member's grandmother. Additionally, a message on *TALEBEARERS'* campaign page on 20/5/2015 read: "'This is from Granny not me!'"

¹¹⁵ A matriach of a member of *DUPLICATE* left a comment on 12/4/2018 in the campaign page: "The very best of luck with putting the show together, it sounds amazing and we look forward to seeing it when it's up and running". She donated £200 to the project. Another matriach donated £50 and wrote on 13/4/2018: "We must support and protect the arts and culture. Where the drama and joy of humanity collide in simplicity and complexity. Good luck. Love from Oz". Other than personal accounts of a few graduate theatre companies, my presence at *WOWZER's* (Edinburgh Fringe, 2018), *DUPLICATE's* (London Pub Theatre, 2018) and *DAPPER's* (University Creative Media Hub, 2018) performances confirmed the attendance of their family members.

linking the theatre companies to 'new-ish' networks, parents play the bridging role in expanding the social capital of their children's ventures.

6.4.2 Friendship Network

Although friends gave less individually, they make up graduate theatre makers' largest numbers of backers, surpassing family members. The majority of friends who backed theatre projects tend to be those studying for the same course, department or faculty, members of the drama club or society committees, many of whom have seen the theatre makers performed, and hence, were able to vouch for the talent of the campaigners¹¹⁶. However, generally, friends donated to crowdfunding campaigns because they understood the reality of production cost and the amount of work it takes to stage a play. Donations among fellow students and graduates are therefore highly driven by the empathy of having experienced it themselves, or the understanding of obstacles in securing funds for artistic work, particularly as someone just starting out.

Donations from friends provide a motivational peer affirmation originating in their belief in the project, centring on why the project had to be produced and deserved to be supported. In fact, peer solidarity is evident as friends from the same faculty see themselves as fellow artists offering support for one another in their common struggle. Such sense of fellowship has also justified giving among students of similar or related fields, despite not knowing each other personally. Often, the artistic mission itself was sufficient to persuade them to donate, and because these donations are usually in small amounts, they speak more of the breadth and

¹¹⁶ On 20/2//2018, a backer who donated £100 to *BLOOM!* left a comment the campaign page : "I'm sure it will be another great show. You and smash it, fellas:)" On 14/2/2018, another backer wrote "Good luck, boys!! Bloody lovely working in the same building as you, feeling the love. It's like we're back at school again, You'll smash the show. I just know it! Can't wait to see it! This backer donated £10.

volume of support among peers rather than their total cost in monetary value¹¹⁷. Here, the network structure is horizontal and non-hierarchical, defined by the spirit of camaraderie that their artistic quest binds. The friendship network of graduate theatre companies is characteristically bonding social capital but as they sometimes also get the support of students they do not know¹¹⁸, its structural dimension includes bridging social capital.

A few graduate theatre companies have also received donations from their course tutors or lecturers who wished to see students realize their potential and push their work further¹¹⁹. Although a minority, members of university staff represent a vertical network structure whose views and opinions on the project carry weight, and whose recommendation for students in their grant application and university bursaries have proven extremely valuable for three of the companies interviewed, especially in helping them with their debut at fringe festivals.

6.4.3 Community Capital

Community social capital has been particularly absent in the networks of most graduate theatre companies interviewed. At a point where they have just completed their university education, graduate theatre companies' relationship with the community has yet to develop, since forming meaningful, strategic alliances through creative and local partnerships could take up years to develop. Where community connections have begun to emerge, these were usually initiated through members' own involvement and participation in university outreach¹²⁰ projects to cultivate relations with wider members of the community¹²¹.

¹¹⁷ An example of this can be seen in a message by a friend of *BLOOM!*, *MM* on 24/3/2018: "Sounds a brilliant idea! Go for it!! it's not much but I hope this little bit helps". A friend of *CA* wrote on its campaign page on 17/4/2019: "Keep doing the damn thing ladies! Wish I could go see it this year ♥"

¹¹⁸ but by virtue of studying at the same university

¹¹⁹ in the case of *DAPPER*, *DUPLICATE* and *WOWZER*

¹²⁰ most apparent in the case of *DAPPER* and *DUPLICATE*.

¹²¹ most apparent in the case of *BESPOKE*, *DUPLICATE*, and *SPEAK!*.

In a couple of the cases shown, having a member with a history of youth theatre involvement has helped bridge the gap in local community support¹²². Through their former membership with the local youth theatre, these members have given their companies beginner's visibility that from there on has led to invitations to sharing sessions and workshops¹²³. Although these companies might not have obtained much donation from their friendship network, they have managed to promote the kind of work they do, their aspirations and outlook, which indirectly help to justify their application for graduate seed funds, mentorship schemes, and participation in upcoming projects. Similarly, with the advantage of being in a mentorship programme, a few graduate theatre companies have gained publicity for their crowdfunding campaign. Thus, even though new graduate companies might not receive donations from the community level, building and nurturing this connection has contributed in non-monetary ways by uplifting the companies' profile through affiliation, capable of bridging the gap between peer support and institutional funding.

In the post-crowdfunding stage, few graduate theatre companies have taken steps to build their connection with the community after realizing this missing layer of social capital. Learning from the experience of crowdfunding, they have sought to perform at more leisurely and 'winding-down' spaces like café bars, clubs, camps and galas¹²⁴. Meanwhile, companies with plans to crowdfund for the second time have worked at a faster rate to establish this link by partnering with local organizations to perform at community meeting spaces such as pub theatres, libraries, and church halls¹²⁵. This flexibility in performing for various crowds has helped increase the visibility of these companies among the locals, some of whom

¹²² *BESPOKE* and *DUPLICATE*

¹²³ as experienced by *INTREPID*, *DUPLICATE*, and *BESPOKE*.

¹²⁴ as seen in *BLOOM!* and *TALEBEARERS*

¹²⁵ as seen in *DUPLICATE* and *INTREPID*

have shared about the performances on social media thereby further facilitating the companies' online profile.

6.4.4 Institutional Capital

Crowdfunding within six to twenty four months of their founding, the institutional social capital of graduate theatre companies represents their least developed layer of support. For all of them, their strongest link to institutional social capital is their university or centre of training they had attended. Within this period, a few have benefitted from the financial support provided by their respective educational establishments under the graduate entrepreneurial schemes, student performance grants, and similar funding allocations. The successful application of these funds has depended on the candidates' ability to justify project significance, management and operations while also demonstrating how the seed money would be utilized in the process. From this point onwards, former recipients of university seed money have followed various trajectories based on their ability to take their project further according to the presence or absence of continuous university support, reception at fringe festivals and opportunities which have emerged from their participation, commitment in mentorship schemes, and the ability to stay ahead of funding opportunities for new artists or collaborative work with arts organizations.

More customarily, universities have maintained links with their graduates with invitations to return and perform their projects to current theatre students, which reciprocation reignites the existing institutional capital. Some of these sessions have been incorporated into the curriculum as modules, run as workshops, or set up as graduate networking fairs, which have encouraged immediate as well as future collaborative ties and artistic support for the companies.

Meanwhile, other universities have been less engaged with their graduates, leaving them without much direction and support to navigate the industry. In particular, graduates who were keen to start their own companies upon graduating have felt the crucial need for institutional support to elevate the visibility of their work, which could help in securing private and public funding at an earlier date, and mentoring support that extends after graduation and well into the crucial early years of running their companies. Although the affiliation with their respective alma mater has boosted their credibility and trust, which helped in convincing their supporters, a few companies have confirmed the need for prolonged institutional support in sustaining a non-profit endeavour¹²⁶.

Outside the sphere of the university, the institutional social capital of graduate theatre companies has been limited to local arts organizations and centres in graduates' hometowns. Company members' local connections to where they reside, train, and work, have partly eased access to participation in events and collaboration with local arts organizations and local councils supporting institutional aims. However, considering this type of network was largely neglected due to many graduate theatre makers' preoccupation with the fringe festivals, only a few have made a point to work collaboratively at the community level and foster a bridging-brokerage social capital.

Having said that, institutional social capital for graduate theatre companies at this stage has come with the recognition of their production at fringe festivals through cultural awards as well as through the networks they formed with arts organizations and venue operators during their performances there. Winning awards and obtaining positive reviews at fringe festivals have not only given

¹²⁶ *BESPOKE, DAPPER, DUPLICATE, and WOWZER.*

graduate theatre companies an affirmation in the quality of their work, but also facilitated access to opportunities which could bring them a step closer to institutional funding¹²⁷. As reported in the post-crowdfunding phase of graduate theatre companies, the ability to affiliate themselves as a product of certain institutions while also meeting the standards of artistic excellence of trusted bodies have provided them institutional capital advantage as they progress towards the next chapter of their artistic journey. Hence, the association that companies have with these agential actors has proven essential for those crowdfunding again since evidence of this earlier milestone also doubles as credibility in drawing support from all layers of social capital.

Overall, the experience of graduate theatre companies with crowdfunding points to the support that comes largely from the family and friends network which has given shape to a predominantly affective economy that is driven by care rather than the question of production utility to the larger public. While the financial backing from close relations have granted young theatre makers the exploration and experimentation they need for brand development and defining their artistic identity, their highly bonded social capital also has the capacity to insulate them from possible support of broader and vertical networks. Hence, despite the fostering of intrinsic art by the FFF networks, prioritizing future survival may require graduate theatre companies to find a balance in producing work that would also satisfy institutional funders. For an example of backers' demography, and a visual representation showing the overall spread of support for graduate theatre companies see **DIAGRAMS 7** and **8**. From here, I shall proceed with the case of individual artists whose creative philosophy, aside from their online backing, provides a striking point of comparison.

¹²⁷ such as artistic partnerships and touring invitations

DIAGRAMS 7 : Backers for WOWZER's theatre project

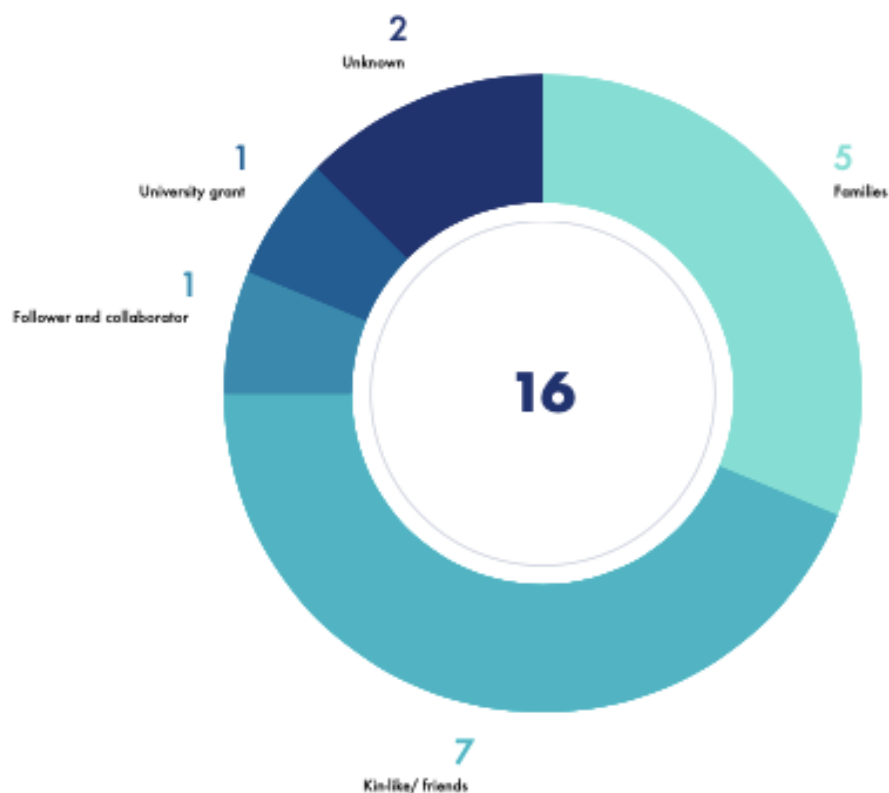
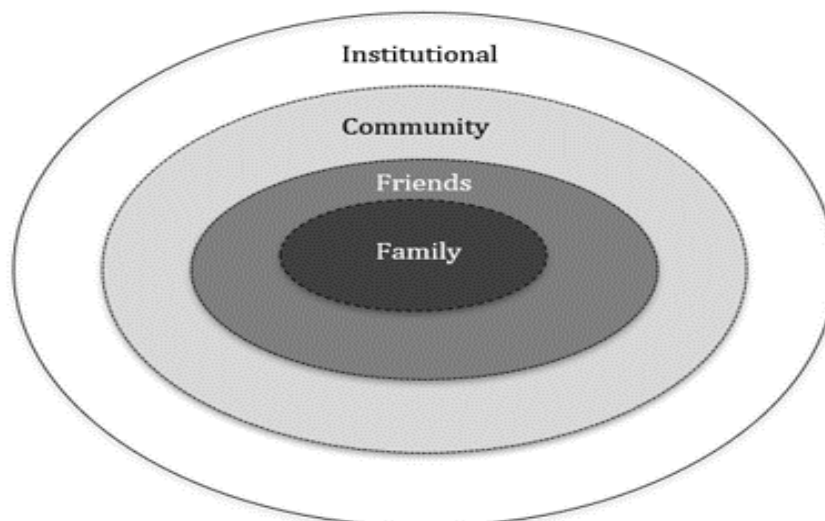


DIAGRAM 8: Representation of online backing of Graduate Theatre Companies*



**Darker gradients suggest a higher concentration of backers*

Chapter 7

INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS

This chapter provides an account of individual artists' experience with crowdfunding by sharing the findings from ten theatre makers, and follow-up interviews with three of them (see **TABLE 6**). Here, I bring together their shared characteristics, developments in their practice since they last crowdfunded, and their successive experience with it. My findings point to how, by prioritizing financial sustainability, crowdfunding presents an opportunity for individuals to pursue a professional career in theatre, allowing passion projects to materialize into community and institutionally supported niche productions, which are largely embedded with the spirit of solo adventure. I posit that individual artists' multi-capabilities, bootstrapping and lean approaches to theatre making align their projects with the narrative of austerity with which the public identifies, therefore, contributing to the willingness to financially support these projects. The tendency for individual artists to respond to the demand side of theatre as seen in their adoption of advocacy, projecting an open attitude towards collaboration and co-creation, has aided the survival and sustainability of their practice, as they single-handedly manage and navigate the theatre scene. In the second half of the chapter, I identify the demography of their backers which demonstrates the capacity for individual artists to draw support from their friends network, community as well as institutional capital more than their family network, largely due to the connections they have formed and been actively engaging, rooted in the credibility in their areas of expertise that has merged with their artistic vocation.

TABLE 6: Crowdfunded projects of the ten individual artists examined

No.	Company	End of campaign date	Amount raised	Backers	Duration (days)	Project Type	Use of funds	Notes
1	Belle	27/10/2015 (106%)	£1275 (%) L:£10 H:£108	47	28	New play using a traditional Japanese storytelling technique.	To cover production costs for a new bicycle storytelling show with a female narrative New stretch target: to meet production costs, pay for professional artists for set design, and reach to more people to experience, live oral storytelling.	Obtained touring partnership with internationally acclaimed producers of an arts centre, a touring scheme with a collaborative network providing theatre in non-traditional spaces.
2	Claire	12/11/2016	£530 (88%) L:£3 H:£100	25	21	A new performance and workshop about the understanding of gender, shaped by the audience	To tour to community groups and public spaces	Makes works that are shaped by the audience Received support from local art centres, local theatres, a local university, a communication trust. Went on to pursue postgraduate studies later.
3	Chrissy	2/7/2016	£2650 (88%) L:£10 H:£150	55	28	New play inspired by a runner's blog	To obtain the service from a theatre designer to hold the project together.	Received ACE funding for writing and R&D

No.	Company	End of campaign date	Amount raised	Backers	Duration (days)	Project Type	Use of funds	Notes
4	<i>Ella</i>	13/6/2016	£620 L:£10 H:£50	24	56	New comedy	To cover the costs for venue hire, props, costumes.	First writing venture and solo acting. Background in music.
5	<i>Jemma</i>	3/6/2016	£7190 (119%) L:£10 H:£500	155	35	New play addressing post-natal depression	To cover costs for venue and marketing New stretch target: To pay for PR and printing, technician while performing in Edinburgh, and studio fee for song recording.	Professional writer and actor's solo project. Has supported to two their productions. No institutional funding at the time of crowdfunding.
6	<i>Jules</i>	4/7/2017	£400 (88%) L:£2 H:£155	12	28	New multi-sensory theatre for early years and special education needs audience	For R&D	Developed from audience of previous production. Granted £300 from a children's charity. Previous show won best children and family international youth arts festival, and community awards.

		End of campaign date	Amount raised	Backers	Duration (days)	Project Type	Use of funds	Notes
		4/10/2018	£500 (100%) L: £5 H: £150	15	28	New early years production, children with special needs.	Pay for artist's wage. Previous shows have been written, produced, and created on no salary.	Specializes in sensory approaches to access and inclusion in cultural space and venue. Member of outdoor arts and creative learning guild with over 20 local and national clients.
7	Marisole	9/12/2016	£7538 (107%) L: £1 H: £500	105	56	New coming of age tale of an elderly	New stretch target: N/A	Writer, director, background in TV.
8	Ollie	22/12/2016	£685 (45%) L: £5 H: £100	19	14	New puppetry show for school tours	To obtain professional mentorship, film the show for the company's website, publicity, lighting course to improve set performance.	Background in teaching for all ages and educational needs. Seen the transformative effects on children. No institutional funding at the time of crowdfunding.

No.	Company	End of campaign date	Amount raised	Backers	Duration (days)	Project Type	Use of funds	Notes
9	Tabatha	8/3/2017	£4000 (100%) L: £10 H: £1000	75	28	Develop a new visual puppet show for families and start a new outreach programme for children and young people with special needs at schools and community venues.	New stretch target: An extra 1000 to go towards a new tour van for the company	Approved for 25% (£1000) ACE bridged matchfunding Partnering with a creative network and another theatre company for the outreach component]
		19/4/2019	£2022 (101%) L:£5 H:£175	43	34	New theatre extravaganza with outreach and community choir, premiering at a local museum		
10	Grady	8/12/2015	£3000 (100%) L: £10 H: £500	77	42	A new comedy using mime, animation and projection	To cover the costs of 2 to 3 weeks of R&D, a rehearsal space, a director, a graphic designer, venue booking, flyers, and promotion. New stretch target to book a preview week, buy a projector and screen.	No institutional support at the point of crowdfunding. Project started after seriously thinking about making own work other than auditioning.

7.1 From Passion Projects to Professional Performers

In nine out of the ten cases examined, crowdfunding has been used to jumpstart a solo career in theatre, otherwise, simply as an opportunity to turn their passion projects into reality. With previous years of employment in various fields such as education, charity, arts administration, television, and music, crowdfunding has presented these users with a chance to initiate their long-awaited ambition. Hence, it was a matter of time before they finally took a leap of faith and eventually left their day jobs or just experimenting on the side, to embark on a lone artistic pathway. Among those who have made a calculated decision to pursue a solo professional career as theatre makers, their high level of preparedness upon entering the scene came from having contemplated years ahead on the social and financial support that would be crucial to their practice in the longer run¹²⁸. Meanwhile, others have used crowdfunding to finance a theatre production that started as a personal project which has since helped propel them into their respective careers¹²⁹.

With the celebration of individual passion, creativity, and urgency to act upon their dream, the accessibility of crowdfunding has presented creators at any level with greater inclusivity and opportunities to bring their own brand creativity in the industry. In light of this sense of adventure, the possibility of projects being realized with the help of the crowd has been given a huge boost with taglines like “where innovative ideas come to life”¹³⁰, “bring your creative projects to life”¹³¹, “where ideas happen”¹³² on major crowdfunding platforms. With the arts particularly, the notion of passion projects became the touch point of democratization of creativity.

¹²⁸ as seen in the cases of *Belle*, *Chrissy*, *Jules*, *Ollie*, and *Tabatha*.

¹²⁹ as seen in the cases of *Claire*, *Helen*, *Jemma*, and *Marisole*.

¹³⁰ *indiegogo*, established in 2008

¹³¹ *kickstarter.com*, established in 2009

¹³² *crowdfunder.co.uk*, established in 2011

Since potentially anyone with a disposition to create, and the capacity to gather financial support could transform a hobby, an interest or a lifelong ambition into reality, campaigns could easily start by publishing projects on crowdfunding platforms. Hence, with passion projects as the overarching impetus, semi-professionals, enthusiasts, and amateurs from various career backgrounds have been found to work on their debut productions¹³³, where previously, funding privileges have been restricted to qualified practitioners.

The interviews show that productions by individual artists reflect the roles they have been meaning to take up; be it scriptwriting, directing, producing, acting, or a combination of these talents on their own terms, based on causes which they strongly believe. Therefore, crowdfunding has presented itself as an opportunity to 'go solo' or 'do one's own thing', instead of supporting gigs, fulfilling contractual or fixed assignments set by their employers where they would be at the creative disposal of other parties. The following cases narrated the journey of *Jules*, *Belle*, and *Tabatha* in their decision to crowdfund their project.

After years of practising as a therapist and working in senior management for a charity, Jules finally succeeded in fulfilling her lifelong dream to perform professionally after a detour in her school days. Previously, *Jules* had been part of a musical festival troupe performing in culturally deprived regions but it was not until she found her voice in therapeutic theatre through which she could merge her training in therapy education with her artistic drive that she seriously reconsidered founding her own theatre production. Eventually responding to the calling for this artistic vocation, *Jules* decided to crowdfund after securing two small grants; one

¹³³ With crowdfunding platforms championing the ideology of ideation from which users can capitalize, the promotion of creativity as key to finding new solutions for everyday problems through innovations which are capable of filling in gaps in the industry and consumer society, the open call for creators and their untapped ideas to the current shortcomings around them simultaneously meant that creativity was no longer seen as exclusively exercised by experts or industry players

from a social enterprise pitch, and the other from a foundation supporting children's engagement with the arts. With the receptivity of the local community towards her idea, and the confidence in therapeutic training, crowdfunding prompted *Jules* to follow through her much-delayed personal project, and sees it as a stepping-stone to a financially sustaining full-time endeavour.

Belle, on the other hand, was an arts administrator for an arts organization for more than two decades, whose job had revolved around securing the company's next source of funding. Having submitted her ACE funding application earlier, *Belle* was working towards reaching her crowdfunding target when she received news that half of the amount she raised would be matched by its match crowdfunding scheme, which provided her with more funds than she had originally targeted. Here, *Belle's* years of administrative experience had paid off in her successful first attempt at both funding methods for her first solo passion project. Receiving these funds has since enabled *Belle* to make progress in her vocation while keeping it sustainable from the start.

Tabatha's case is an example of artists who have previously received public funding before eventually having to crowdfund to sustain their enterprise. Formerly working in customer service, after pursuing her postgraduate studies in stage design, *Tabatha* decided to re-create "the magic of everyday"¹³⁴ as a living. Performing as a puppeteer means re-living an earlier phase of puppetry experimentation, which started when *Tabatha* and her friend performed in the evenings after work. Besides inheriting the talent for painting from her parents, *Tabatha* herself is a self-made puppeteer with a penchant for quirky children's stories. The year *Tabatha* crowdfunded her project was the year her funding bid

¹³⁴ in her own words

from ACE was rejected for the sixth time due to oversubscription of theatre projects in her locality. *Tabatha* then submitted another application to ACE when she campaigned for her project on *crowdfunder.co.uk* and was fortunate to have the 25% of the funds she raised matched by ACE in her first crowdfunding attempt. Thus, almost losing out on ACE funding that year has forced *Tabatha* to seriously reconsider becoming sustainable as an artist who has formerly and consecutively been supported by institutional funders.

From these cases, crowdfunding evidently presents an opportunity for individuals with a passion for theatre making to take calculated risks and work towards their dream profession. Their prior work experience, aside from allowing them to create a niche in theatre-making, has provided them with relevant skills and exposure, and allowed them the incubation period to prepare the groundwork towards pursuing their ambition while maintaining their concern for financial sustainability even if it means entering the theatre scene relatively late.

7.2 Lone Operation, Multicapability, Bootstrapping, and Lean Strategy to Theatre Making

The individual artists' concern for financial survival and sustainability is not at all unfounded considering there was no special category allocated for their funding application prior to mid-2018. Until then, individual artists have had to apply within the same category as arts organizations for both below £15,000, and above £15,000 grant applications from ACE¹³⁵. Without a separate category, this meant that individual artists have had to compete for funding alongside ensembles and larger theatre companies while existing as sole traders responsible for their company alone. Since then, a grantium specifically catered for individual artists has been made available for the amount ranging from £2,000 to £10,000 per

¹³⁵ artscouncil.org.uk

project¹³⁶, thus, finally allowing individual artists to apply within their own category. Perhaps because of the competitive institutional funding and the ritual of the lone struggle, individual artists' efforts to stay afloat financially are evident in their functional multicapability, as they adopt bootstrapping strategies and lean approaches to theatre making.

As lone enterprises, individual artists particularly hold an all-encompassing role of building and managing the company which involves charting its direction, seeking financial resources, establishing networks, managing day-to-day administrative tasks; working on their project research and development while revisiting earlier projects, as well as micro-managing production details¹³⁷. While it is common for individual artists to take on various tasks pertaining to their project independently from start to finish, certain tasks would have to be outsourced because of the number of acting roles, and the technical expertise needed to piece a play together. Based on specific needs of projects, individual artists might decide to perform solo, invite freelance theatre makers to perform together, co-direct, co-produce, or hire technical assistance along the way. Where individual artists require certain skill sets outside their usual remit¹³⁸ or when it is not possible for them to perform these tasks simultaneously¹³⁹, individual artists would temporarily employ other artists for their service.

To illustrate, *Tabatha*, has penned her own plays and directed them, made her mechanical puppets from scratch, designed the stage and backdrop, painted and designed posters, prepared marketing materials, racked up suitable costumes and props, and transported all items in her van during tours. With the amount raised

¹³⁶ artscouncil.org.uk

¹³⁷ such as costumes, props, and logistics

¹³⁸ such as set or prop building

¹³⁹ such as being both an actor and a director

from her crowdfunding campaign, *Tabatha* was able her to cover these production costs, including the hiring of a stage technician, which was inevitable for her to single-handedly deliver. However, it was only upon being granted ACE funding that she was able to incorporate a richer visual experience and the intended effect she wanted for her audience by outsourcing the task of sewing and putting together a sensory collage to a professional prop seamstress, which was a significant element to the play to be finished in time for her scheduled performances. With her old van permanently becoming out of service after a series of breakdowns in the weeks closer to the deadline, *Tabatha* was lucky that her new stretch target of £1000 has made it possible to replace her irreparable tour van.

As a beneficiary of a match crowdfunding scheme, *Tabatha* was later able to pay for a director when the production went on tour, hence, helping her improve the performance aspect of the play. Before long, *Tabatha* was in the position to afford an assistant producer to help access possible funds for her next project while she was touring for her earlier productions. The funds also saved *Tabatha* from having to cancel all venue bookings and risk no-show penalties that the delay of her show would have cost if she were not able to raise sufficient funds in due time. It would have also resulted in an extensive income lost, and consequently, her ability to pay her co-performer whom she had already contracted that season, thinking that her ACE application would be as successful as before.

Similarly, *Jules* and *Belle* have built their company single-handedly from scratch and managed all aspects of their projects, which included hiring another artist or a creative to boost the projects' artistic potential. While being sole traders have allowed them to steer their work in the way they see fit, jump at opportunities, explore untapped markets, experiment with their own branding of artistry, build

desirable connections, and shape them towards a more sustainable endeavour at their own pace rather than running a company with multiple decision makers, operating the company alone also means having to adopt a lean strategy that will pervade most aspects of decision-making, particularly concerning production from the ideation stage to execution, mobility, marketing, and touring, which forces its artistic aspect to work against production constraints mainly caused by financial and labour shortage.

Most theatre projects by individual artists did not require technical assistance aside from those they could manage themselves. This is strategically their choice of venue, and mostly a purposely-designed project which performance requires the least number of crew. To illustrate, *Jules* alternately assume centre stage when transitioning prop change by using voice manipulation and conducting a sing-along with their young audience during specific scenes in the play to allow for seamless switching of roles. Part of this strategy includes pre-arranging sensory objects to travel along from one end of the room to another in cross-directions as the stage transitioned from one scene to the next. Thus, as a performance planned with a minimum cast and simple logistics in mind, it was necessary to employ engagement strategies to optimize time-space efficiency without compromising the theatrical experience.

A more common challenge for individual artists assuming all roles is the evaluation of their own performance¹⁴⁰. While this is usually overcome by employing a freelance co-director, sometimes overseeing the performance requires the manipulation of shadow puppetry, short films and other techniques not only to allow a few characters to appear together in the same scene but also to provide

¹⁴⁰ as with the performances by *Tabatha* and *Jules* where they are the main and sometimes the only actor

room for the artist to step out and judge the play from the perspective of a director. By cutting down on hiring costs, individual artists have been able to charge their audience low priced tickets¹⁴¹, which in turn, encouraged more families to attend their shows, not just the ones they crowdfunded.

Multifunctional mobile props and backdrops which transition and transform easily, allowing individual artists to carry and transport in their own vehicle are part of the lean strategies to minimize the logistics involved, and maximize tour commitments to more than one outstation venue per day. With this flexibility, individual artists are free to fulfil touring demands and experiment with different performance venues for different affects, such as performing at the library one day and a farm early the next day, as seen in *Jules'* case, or from performing at the countryside and then at holiday promenades in *Belle's* case.

With mobility being the core of her artistry, every decision *Belle* made for her solo performance has revolved around a mobile storytelling vehicle. The plan was to build a miniature stage-box which would allow her to travel light and far to outdoor performance spaces, while simultaneously functioning as an audience engagement prop. Hence, while waiting for ACE's funding response, *Belle* decided to crowdfund so that she could have some funds to fall back on if her application was turned down. Fortunately, her crowdfunding target was matched by ACE, allowing her to afford a professional artist for proper design work while she continued to research and develop new plays, and before long, performed at international conferences on work tours. Following the mobilization of both funds to her project, *Belle* had also managed to advance to the next stage of her artistic career by working towards an international assignment:

¹⁴¹ their tickets ranged between £5 to £8 per audience

“It meant that I had the money to basically pay other people to get things done (*which I could not do myself*) [...] I didn’t have any other resources, so crowdfunding gave me a really good stead. It allowed me to move forward more quickly and since then I’ve been able to built on it bit by bit. It really gave me a strong backbone to everything.”

- Belle

Overall, individual artists have managed to put together what they need for their performance on a more modest budget than other theatre companies. This capacity for making theatre at an affordable rate with low overhead cost means that campaigns by individual artists could reach their funding targets at a faster rate, and made ready for productions sooner. In the cases studied, individual artists have opted for inexpensive materials and effective use of existing skills or resources in transforming their artistic vision into reality. By sharing the bootstrapping narrative on their crowdfunding campaign pages, individual artists’ funding solicitations were quick to gain supporters who admire their drive, and empathize with the challenges of running a company on their own. Working on small-scale plays, individual artists have been shown to pursue a pragmatic approach to crowdfunding by taking into consideration the amount of donations that their existing and prospective grassroots supporters are likely to give, as they create an opportunity to market themselves as makers of affordable theatre:

“Our company ethos is about low cost, no cost. We make all our productions based on a tiny shoestring, which means that crowdfunding immediately becomes something that ...[...] it means that we could make a project quickly...”

-Jules

Here, individual artists’ knowledge of their average audience member’s willingness-to-pay for their local performances has allowed them to estimate more accurately the funds they would need to sustain the project, which contributed to

its faster reach and release¹⁴², and therefore, the opportunity to roll it out quickly as they began working on another project for a different target audience¹⁴³, or stretching the same project for as long as possible by appealing to different groups of audience¹⁴⁴. As they obtained the funds sooner, they were able to generate income from ticket sales, and use their profit to partially fund their next project. This rolling technique has allowed projects to make way for subsequent projects:

“I’m a sole trader and my company is essentially me [...] so I have no kind of employment and back office cost...so I am able to offer a very good price [...] that means a tiny amount of renewable and inconsumable resources from each production roll back into our projects...”

- *Jules*

Despite their extensively shared criterion with cultural entrepreneurs, individual artists are less likely to see themselves in the same light¹⁴⁵, preferring instead to be identified as ‘sole performers’, if not simply as ‘sole traders’ running a largely non-profit endeavour. Collectively, they pride themselves in exercising multiple roles on their own, and in taking a strong stand in working on small budgets with maximum impact.

7.3 Openness to Co-Creation and Collaboration

As sole traders, working in collaboration with other artists or creatives in the artistic and technical sphere of production depends on the project type, and the kind of expertise needed for it to materialize at different phases of production. With the sole decision to bring different freelance artists on board, as and when needed to accommodate varying projects and work arrangements, individual artists may also

¹⁴² Only 2 projects by individual artists were raised within 56 days in comparison to 5 projects by graduate theatre companies which were raised within the same duration (see *APPENDICES:B*)

¹⁴³ as seen in the strategy adopted by *Jules* and *Tabatha*

¹⁴⁴ as seen in the strategy adopted by *Belle* and *Joanne*

¹⁴⁵ Klammer (2011) characterizes good cultural entrepreneurs to be alert to opportunities (Kirzner); creative in artistic content, organizing conversation and arranging finances; passionate and committed to artistic content with everything else including economics being subsidiary; persuasive in convincing good artists to work with them, bring about interest in the art, get people involved and able to generate the necessary funds, including donations and the like; prudent and exhibit courage, hope and faith in their actions (McCloskey, 2006).

opt to pair with another performer for a longer duration where it benefits both parties to do so, and rely on technical support that is adaptable to the struggles of funding delays and uncertainties. Hence, depending on the length and cycle of tours, the engagement of different co-performer is likely to change the dynamics of the play, sometimes allowing different elements to take centrestage, and aspects of the play to be revised from different pairings.

Evidently, working collaboratively with different freelance creatives across productions and tours have often steered these temporary partnerships into the co-creation of ideas with potential niche outcomes. For instance, in all the company's theatre productions since its inception in 2016, *Jules* has appointed her sister who is an expert in special needs education to collaborate with her experience of working with young persons. To date, the theatre company has produced four plays, all of which have been staged in their locality, surrounding regions and children's fringe festivals. Together, they have devised performances inspired by books on special needs and carers' suggestions on the subjects aimed for their young audience in which *Jules* incorporated her theatrical and therapeutic counselling knowledge with special needs signing which brings novelty and inclusivity to their production.

Similarly, as a stage designer and puppeteer, *Tabatha* has managed to work on her own for most of the time but having multiple characters in her play would require hiring a freelance artist to perform alongside. In fact, the decision to bring another performer on board becomes increasingly inevitable when the same play is touring in different seasons, whereby different partnerships brought performative elements that added value to the original play. Additionally, the experience of working with different artists has helped *Tabatha* find compatibility with artists

whom she would want to work on certain projects because of their fit together, and with others whose gaps in between gigs schedule matched her own. Specifically, for *Tabatha*, while the financial support received from her crowdfunding campaigns alongside the ensuing institutional funding has enabled her to continue paying the wages of her freelance performers and technician, it has afforded her the freedom to work with different artists, thus, the opportunities for co-creation which have enriched her productions.

Other than valuing the input of other creatives, individual artists are seen most open to the idea of co-creation with non-artists. They tend to see input from the audience, community members, online and offline followers as helpful rather than a threat to artistic autonomy, and are highly receptive towards their responses for further revision of the project. Where the productions were instrumentally driven, the individual artists unanimously agreed on making work ultimately for the audience, with co-creation as a principle of collaboration navigating their artistic vision. Far from losing artistic control, these individual artists saw the input gathered from the public as contributing towards maximising the theatrical experience of the target audience. Therefore, the subject of co-creation has been navigated as audience-driven work with the artist applying relevant theories and performance methodologies. Their welcoming and open attitude towards suggestions and feedbacks throughout the production stages blends a two-way input to an enterprise that thrives on constant experimentation with audience reception as constructive revisions to aspects of the production.

To exemplify, the openness towards co-creation is built from the beginning into the company's philosophy like *Jules*'. When *Jules* set up her company, it was clear that the reason for its existence was to respond to the situations she has observed

among children and young persons through the engagements within her former instructional capacity, by offering theatrical experiences tailored to include them in mainstream theatre. Hence, the idea of co-creation was engaged into a process of fusion where *Jules* felt would best address the intended target audience, as well as their families and carers. In the development of devised plays chosen specifically with her audience in mind, *Jules*' fused suggestions from schools where the play had been performed, a parents' network in which she participates, and a forum she has been administering for a specific community of practice consisting mostly of special needs educators in raising issues which strongly resonate with their shared concerns:

"Our new play arose as a result of being on tour for a previous production. Schools were saying this is great, could you please do something that looks more specifically at anger and tantrums [...] so we developed that and went to crowdfund"

- *Jules*

While educators and parents have provided suggestions for new subject matter in their upcoming plays, *Jules*' own observations of audience interactions and the engagements she has programmed during and after the performance provided her valuable points of exchange. Often, families and carers have consulted *Jules* about their children or children under their care, giving *Jules* the opportunity to communicate the therapeutic approaches applied in the show. *Jules*' post-performance chats with parents and carers while her young audience members engage in an allotted playtime simultaneously functions as a cool-down period to relax and exchange views on points highlighted in the play. By responding to her audience, *Jules*' has also played a role in activism through the sharing of knowledge in behavioural therapy from her prior training, and informing them of networks of support they might find useful to cope as parents and educators to children with special needs.

In *Belle's* case, years of deliberation to introduce herself as an individual artist in a niche market meant working closely with creatives who could help realize her unique vision of personalizing and transforming an oriental art unfamiliar in the local theatre scene. Being able to talk with a professional set designer has helped to translate her ideas into reality in the first stage of her individual career, while allowing her to re-envision its next stage after her return from an international conference with international artists, artisans and academics. As a travelling storyteller, *Belle's* work would naturally invite conversations with the audience who are usually curious about aspects of her performance, in particular, the attention drawn from her miniature stage-prop, which concurrently gives the perfect opportunity to impart her knowledge on the origins of the heritage she had adapted while monitoring audience feedback.

The philosophy of converging ideas that can immerse and fuse localized expressions have contributed to *Belle's* project and fed into the larger mission of her work. *Belle's* natural inclination to find joy in working across disciplines that merges with her disposition of open-mindedness has helped in defining the kind of artist she has envisioned for herself; which novelty has assisted in gaining her prominence in the local theatre scene with an international cultural exposure. At the local level, *Belle* gets to share the spotlight with other promenade performers, which network she now belongs, while also being part of the larger artistry of traditional storytelling that pays homage to its international heritage¹⁴⁶.

In these two cases, individual artists perceive co-creation as a philosophy and practice in their line of craft with a higher degree and openness to public input than their artistic peers. With a firm belief in making work for the audience first and

¹⁴⁶ *Belle's* project has origins in the Japanese tradition

foremost, individual artists tend to take the position of working along with the needs of their target audience whilst maintaining artistic control of direction, technical and instructional aspects of the collaboration. Viewing audience input as an important ingredient to their craft, co-creation has generated ideas in the formative stage of the production and helped individual artists to further refine it after.

7.4 Backers of Theatre Projects by Individual Artists

In comparison to the online backing of graduate theatre companies which tends to gather amongst the family and friends network (a horizontal leaning), support for individual artists is shown to cut across all levels of social capital ranging from familial, friendship, community and institutional networks, which tends to include both horizontal and vertical network structures. This indicates that financial backing for theatre projects by individual artists comes both from individuals of similar standing, offering social cohesion through solidarity, as well as those in the position of access to structural holes that can offer larger financial backing if not directly, then indirectly through cultural and reputational capital of recognized organizations or institutions. Such demography also suggests individual artists as highly networked individuals whose decision to undertake a professional artistic pathway is a process which groundwork has earlier stemmed from the roles held and connections made across previous employment, involvement in interest groups and community activities. Thus, projects by individual artists have benefitted from bonding, bridging and brokerage social capital, encompassing a mixed of bottom-up and top-down support.

7.4.1 Family Capital

Family members who backed individual artists tend to be extended rather than immediate family members. However, this is not to be mistaken for the absence of support from immediate family members, but rather, as an indicator that individual artists are capable of reeling in support from family members who are further removed in the family tree¹⁴⁷. This is also because the individual artists interviewed are adults with a previous history of paid employment, hence, the donations they received were mainly directed at supporting the passion for their work, and in the spirit of adventure in making it alone. Therefore, donations from close family members happened rarely as individual artists have not included them in the ask, since the decision to switch jobs and becoming professional artists at midlife has understandably been a choice they made with full knowledge of the financial risks involved.

Immediate family members of individual artists are more likely to either work in the industry or related fields, and where they are not, their assistance has inherently come in the form of cognitive, emotional or in-kind support. For example, *Tabatha's* husband is her reliable and dependable stage technician who has worked for numerous artists beforehand, and whose networks *Tabatha* is able to access through brokerage. Meanwhile, *Tabatha's* mother who was a professional visual artist in her younger days has remained in touch with her crowd of musician friends to this day. Observably, in her crowdfunding campaigns, *Tabatha's* online backing has come from inter-generational reciprocal backing from her mother's earlier support to her fellow artists. Hence, in their own way, both have been able to provide *Tabatha* with their personal connections to people they know in the industry.

¹⁴⁷ such as great paternal uncle, distant aunt, and family friends of late father

In *Jules'* case, her parallel work with children and young people, alongside her sister's background in educational practice and consultancy, present an overlap in which she could further transform their joined effort into inclusive theatre that their local community has desperately needed. Hence, when *Jules* decided to set up her own theatre company, naturally, she thought of bridging their fields together and tailoring them for the young people and their families whom she had encountered first-hand in her former line of work. With her sister as a freelance performer and a full-time educator, *Jules* gets to fulfill her roles as a full-time performer, a part-time counsellor and an activist. Just as *Jules* has brought her sister on board with her theatre projects, she has been able to team up with her sister's educational expos and tours. Together, their family ties symbiotically feed into each other's professions, from where they string along the mechanical and interest-based social solidarity of their combined professional networks as seen in the demography of their backers.

Individual artists who have passionately strived to become professional performers have had surprised donations from understanding and generous family members. *Belle's* project, for example, which is by nature an exclusively solo performance, means that she only has her stock of social capital to rely on. She later found that among her backers were her distant relatives who had donated £100 each to her crowdfunding campaign; an amount she felt was too huge for them to contribute. Their contribution touched her deeply since she did not expect them to donate as much. Nevertheless, with the closure of the company she had previously worked for, *Belle* understood that the financial backing proved more than their support for her work but as a way of strengthening her faith in the solo quest she has been dreaming of and as means of showing their vote of confidence in her venture.

7.4.2 Friendship Network

Friends who backed individual artists consist of those known in the realm of work. They tend to be former colleagues, former producers and acquaintances fostered from the community of practice. Among them are friends with a similar artistic mission and shared belief in what individual artists strive to achieve socially, as well as artistically¹⁴⁸. Friends who backed individual artists understand their drive, commitment, and ability to stretch the little amount of funding they receive into work that can benefit the audience and larger community¹⁴⁹. Most of them have knowledge of the individual artists' performance, and therefore, could readily vouch for their talent, creativity, work ethics and value of their project to their target audience¹⁵⁰. Thus, when the time came for these individual artists to crowdfund their project, their friends knew that even a £10 contribution would go a long way to help the project achieves its aims. Nevertheless, friends at this level of social capital are hard to be distinguished from those at the community level because it is through this overlapping link that individual artists seep into the wider network of support.

The individual artists interviewed are all members of the community of practice specific to their art, which provided them with support at peer level network, with the added advantage of associational links to communities of support. To illustrate, *Tabatha* has a long membership with her network of puppeteers; *Jules* is an active member of several peer-led activist groups locally and nationally; and *Belle* has associates across her many health and educational projects. Because of the

¹⁴⁸ On *Belle's* campaign page, *FW* donated and wrote on 26/10/2015: "All the best to a natural born storyteller and my oldest friend." Meanwhile, on *Ella's* campaign page, her friend *LJ* left the comment dated 30/4/2016: I love your story and the reward killed it for me! [...] This sounds great [...] I wish you every success as it is so hard these days! Lots of love, x

¹⁴⁹ An example of this is a message *Jemma's* friend *AP* left her on 29/4/2016: "Thank you for speaking up about and highlighting such an important issue. Hope I get to catch the show x"

¹⁵⁰ Among others, this is indicated in a comment by *Jemma's* friend *DN* on her crowdfunding page on 30/4/2016: "Just returned from NYC and 2 Broadway shows. Well, you're clearly way more talented than that lot! So...it's a no-brainer. We wish you all the success in the world."

membership with fellow artists and those they have been connected through previous engagements, online backing from individual artists have gathered among those who understood the rationale for the project and why the projects needed to happen. In fact, these backers would not expect anything less than these individual artists to rise to the challenge of meaningful projects, knowing the contribution that their work can make to the field, and society at large.

7.4.3 Community Capital

As active members of their local community, individual artists carry a strong civic presence as their projects are generally seen to directly benefit the community. Their community social capital ranged from their alumnus ties to schools and higher educational institutions, membership with local organizations and neighbourhood connections since they were young. Having developed a tight-knit local presence, individual artists have been able to develop their work seamlessly across the local educational network of schools, not just where they used to study, but also where their children and their friends' children are studying. The expansive connection of the educational setting, in combination with word-of-mouth have been agential in extended some of these small-scale productions beyond the locality.

As members of interest groups themselves, individual artists tend to have a following from people who share their goals¹⁵¹ and are more likely to be supported when locals themselves could see the need for such work in their community. As they too envision a better future for the community, backing an individual artist's

¹⁵¹ such as inclusion and young people

mission means enabling someone capable of realizing a noble aspiration for all¹⁵². To demonstrate, *Tabatha* is a known figure in her local independent theatre arena where small productions are staged, and crew casually mingle with audience members and patrons frequenting the venue. As a homegrown artist, she has built a good rapport with the staff and fellow artists utilizing spaces where she runs the research and development of her projects alongside outreach programmes in the locality. Through her membership with the puppetry network, sharing knowledge of the craft has allowed fellow artists to further appreciate the value of her work. Because of her community involvement, *Tabatha's* extended crowd also includes community artists consisting of painters and musicians who are supportive of each other's struggles. Therefore, *Tabatha's* grassroots support can be traced back to her friendship, professional, and community levels of social capital.

As for *Jules* whose previous job has given her numerous opportunities to work with individuals with special needs, their carers and teachers, making the transition into a theatre maker specializing in behavioural and emotional needs appears to be a necessary calling. With extended connections consisting of fellow discussants in online forums where carers and teachers seek advice and support, *Jules's* active blogging on the subject of her expertise provides her with a ready following. By regularly updating her artistic projects designed to deal with the specific issues highlighted in her articles, *Jules* has simultaneously obtained support among her readership who eventually became her backers.

To further illustrate, *Belle's* communal connection is derived from the many community programmes she has facilitated over the years. Recently, when she

¹⁵² *Jules's* backer, *MP* wrote on her campaign page on 10/9/2018: "You do beautiful and needed work. It's a privilege to support your productions!". On 1/10/2018, *FF* wrote: "We love {...]and look forward to new shows to help little people understand emotions, etc, and had to support this one {...]!"

began to take her craft more seriously as a solo artist, joining the local promenade scene has secured her a venue, membership to the network of promenade performers, and regular slots to perform at their signature events. Some of the support for *Belle*'s work has come from these various exposures, and has stood for the justification that has led her to obtain institutional funding.

7.4.4 Institutional Capital

In one way or another, all the individual artists interviewed have had previous connections with public or private funding institutions as former grant or award recipients, or at least been in contact with prospective funders to discuss and obtain feedback on the possibility of project funding. Prior funding applications to funding institutions have included funding applications to ACE, trusts and foundations, charities, as well as networks aligned and related to their artistic and social cause where their project would be highly relevant¹⁵³. Some of these institutions responded to individual artists in due time, thereby allowing them to gather the momentum of their crowdfunding campaign as they periodically update news on their campaign pages, and reel in further support for the projects as their campaign deadline drew near. While the immediate benefit of institutional backing is the funding itself, its extended benefit entails a top-down 'seal of approval', simultaneously functioning as a trust indicator which brings affirmation to the work, hence, inviting bottom-up support from individual backers. In awarding seed monies and grants, institutions appear to bestow individual artists with reputational capital which currency is embedded in the authorization of their partnership and alliance. Underlying the reciprocation of these institutional ties is their shared vision for the wider society where their respective aims and policy meet on common grounds. In such cases, individual artists' institutional capital embodies

¹⁵³ such as children's art foundation, practitioners networks, residency programme sponsor, and university affiliation

their vertical network structure (of resource mobilization and artistic legitimacy) that is fortified by their affiliation with multiple community networks and institutions, which place them in the position to retain their professional vocation¹⁵⁴.

To illustrate, when *Tabatha* was campaigning to crowdfund her project, she has been co-directing at a company specializing in adult visual theatre, mentoring at a number of emerging theatre companies, theatre schools and theatre venues; while undergoing training herself in clowning, ensemble work and physical theatre with renowned specialists in the field. Meanwhile, two of her freelance artists have been working with several reputable theatre establishments, among which are nationally and internationally touring companies. Hence, her crowdfunded project has also benefitted from their institutional social capital other than *Tabatha's* own. The project eventually met 100% target which qualified it for a £1000 ACE match crowdfunding, allowing *Tabatha* to proceed with touring performances as planned and increase the intake of freelancers for her multiple productions. Since she last crowdfunded, *Tabatha* has worked in collaboration with the local museum through which she has devised a new production.

The road to ACE funding has been tougher for *Jules* although she has managed to obtain grants from other institutions. With the support from an advocacy group and a small trust grant, *Jules* decided to develop a new project by taking part in a local social enterprise scheme. At the pitch, *Jules'* idea for her community has won her some seed money, and later secured her a residency for its research and development. This boost of vertical network has led *Jules* to launch her second non-profit project and first crowdfunding campaign with a modest total backing of £500 that has provided her the momentum to stay sustainable to this day. *Jules*

¹⁵⁴ A professional network donated to *Jules'* project on 3/10/2018, leaving a note: "You have the whole hearted support of *PST*, very much hope to be able to see the performance!"

then continued to produce more plays and focussed on strategizing her bid for ACE funding in her next application. She was also successful in her second crowdfunding project, raising the same amount as she did previously, but this time with more positive reviews, increased media attention, and the opportunity to perform beyond schools and library settings after collaborating with zoo and farm authorities. *Jules* finally received her first funding of £350 from ACE for her third crowdfunded project after numerous collaborations at community and associational levels, and the cultural awards won during the company's tours to fringe festivals for the past two years. Although the funding from ACE is relatively small, it represents the recognition *Jules* has been striving for her niche in therapeutic theatre, and therefore, means more to her than the financial support itself.

In comparison, *Belle's* cognitive capital of institutional funding, and experience in arts-related occupation have made her crowdfunding project a whirlwind experience. The numerous alliances *Belle* has formed while still being employed have presented her with the opportunity to pursue her concern for heritage and tourism. Coupled with her personal artistic interest, connections through her previous day job have provided her with a sound prospect to develop and finally realize her own artistic mission. When *Belle* finally started her solo career, she has continued the initiatives across the spheres of public health and education, which portfolios she held previously, fastracking her with support at the institutional level. These vertical connections have helped spearheaded *Belle's* crowdfunding effort, which led to her first solo project being matched by ACE. Since her crowdfunded project, *Belle* has managed to keep her venture sustainable, toured nationally, received invitations to perform abroad where she formed new contacts, whom in turn, have created more avenues for her to showcase her production and the

chance of working on her next material from the experience gathered throughout international conferences and travels.

In summation, with a focus on artistic and financial sustainability, individual artists adopt a more lean and collaborative approach to production that functions in a chain of reciprocity, which they tailor to their strengths and limitations as sole traders. Their experience with crowdfunding demonstrates a push and pull factor between grassroots (horizontal) and top-down (vertical) institutional support which correspondingly induce financial backing to their largely community-driven endeavours. For an example of backers' demography see **DIAGRAM 9**, and for an overall visual illustration of backers for individuals artists see **DIAGRAM 10**. Moving on, I shall now examine how the experience with crowdfunding spells out for established theatre companies.

DIAGRAM 9: Backers of *Chrissy's* theatre project

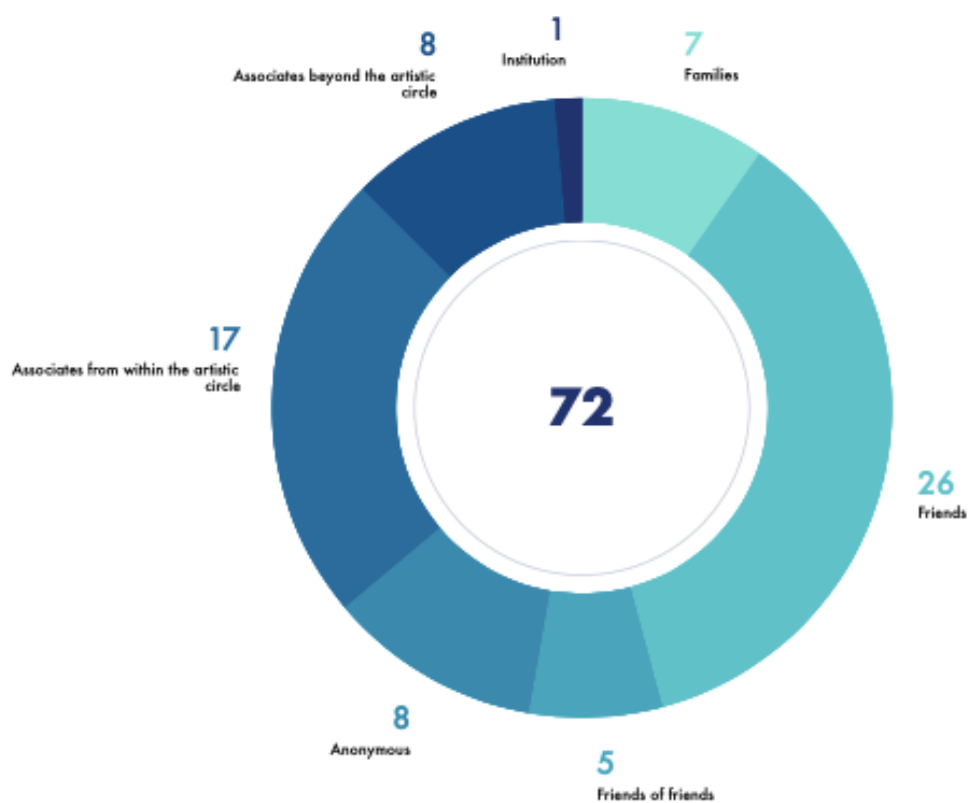
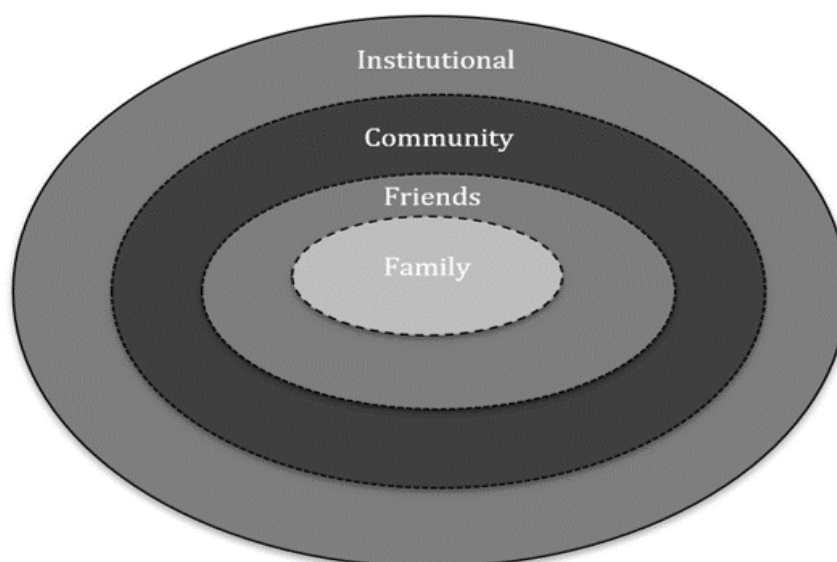


DIAGRAM 10: Representation of online backing of Individual Artists



Chapter 8

ESTABLISHED THEATRE COMPANIES

This chapter presents findings gathered from the interviews with ten established theatre companies, three of which had agreed to be interviewed at different intervals of the crowdfunding process (see **TABLE 7**). The first half of the chapter identifies their shared criteria by connecting their subjective experience as late-entrants to the crowdfunding scene as stemming from the dilemma of asking members of the public for donations, aside from the agony surrounding crowdfunding's potential substitution for institutional funding, and concerns for its suitability to their enterprise. For them, crowdfunding presents the final option to fundraising, doubling as an experimental approach to conventional funding methods for companies with previous history of private and institutional funding. Nevertheless, despite the initial reluctance, their position as cultural leaders and associates in multiple industry partnerships have given them an advantage in gathering support for their campaigns. In the second half of the chapter, I locate their backers according to levels of social capital which demonstrates the capacity for established theatre companies to command resources embedded both in the horizontal and vertical networks due to their existing reputation.

TABLE 7: Crowdfunded projects of the ten established theatre companies examined

No.	Company	End of campaign date	Amount raised	Backers	Duration (days)	Project Type	Use of funds	Notes
1	GC	10/7/2015	£5400 (%) L: £1 H: £500	124	28	A new puppetry production	New stretch target:	Led by an internationally-acclaimed sculptor. Has supported 2 other crowdfunded productions
2	JG	29/9/2016	£3380 (61%) L: £10 H: £300	120	28	New play	For theatre hire, sound and lighting, an extra actor, pay director, props, costumes, rehearsal space, set design, programmes and posters	Secured £14,949 from ACE for writing and R&D
3	KJ	6/7/2017	£526 (%) L: £5 H: £50	21	56	A new highly localized historical play		JK received ACE funding after the crowdfunding campaign for the same production. JK then went on to assist in the crowdfunding of the local community theatre to obtain £1040 (104%) by 22/8/2018 with 55 supporters in 9 days.
4	LD	15/6/2017	£2545 (50%) L: £10 H: £750	31	42	A new theatrical dance piece	To pay for an extra week of rehearsal	Obtained ACE funding and support from a teaching university and dance company.

No.	Company	End of campaign date	Amount raised	Backers	Duration (days)	Project Type	Use of funds	Notes
5	LH	13/4/2016	£1551 L:£5 H:£250	4	56	A new production aimed to initiate conversations on issues within the community, targeting health, social care, and education sectors.	To cover the cost of performing in Budapest	Has obtained support from charities, organizations, and universities.
6	MA	29/12/2016	£5060 (101%) L: £10 H:£1970	41	63	A new political theatre	To pay artists and crew	ACE pledged 25% for raising the first 25% (£1250)
7	MT	1/6/2016	£1750 (175%) L:£10 H:£250	30	28	New play on gender in equality	New stretch target: to pay for logistics costs to Edinburgh Fringe Also raising match funding to go towards the realisation of the incredible set, lighting and sound designs, including materials, paint; paying for carpenters, builders, scenic artists, transport, lighting and sound equipment, van hire, and petrol.	Crowdfunded for 2 previous productions. Supported by ACE and the National Lottery. Supported 1 other crowdfunded project.

No.	Company	End of campaign date	Amount raised	Backers	Duration (days)	Project Type	Use of funds	Notes
8	SA	3/4/2017	£4110 L: £5 H: £1000	59	63	A new library touring project	New stretch target: to employ a production manager for 3 days a week for a year while working on the project.	Has obtained £2000 ACE funding.
9	SH	2/1/2015	£1520 (101%) L: £10 H: £300	37	28	A new piece of children's physical theatre in conjunction with a festival for children and young people	To bring theatre to disadvantage children with an aim to encourage them to achieve their own potential	In collaboration with a set and costume design company and a digital arts organization.
		22/12/2017	£1680 (67%) L: £5 H: £100	62	28	A new production as part of a programme to transform the lives of children	To cover the costs of a live theatre performance, an inspiration day at a museum or art gallery, an arts centre event	Obtained support from universities, a medical association, ACE, an arts centre, city council, city cultural department, a thinktank organization.
10	TA	29/4/2015	£8100 (100%) L: £5 H: £7643	17	56	A new political theatre	New stretch target: to support 21 artists for 6 weeks	Has 17 funders to date including ACE, charities, trusts and foundations.

8.1 The Experience with Institutional Funding and the Crowdfunding Dilemma

Established theatre companies represent the largest group of fundraisers on *crowdfunder.co.uk* between September 2011 and April 2018, with 184 projects raising £296,520 from 5263 backers. With experience between seven to forty years in the industry, the companies interviewed have built a substantial repertoire of work demonstrating artistic excellence and public engagement, along with proof of financial support that would make them preferred candidates of institutional funders. However, despite their greater chance of securing institutional funding, cuts in the sector have presented established theatre companies with the dilemma of utilising crowdfunding, which concept they largely disagree.

The interviews revealed that resorting to crowdfunding was their final option, and a decision they only acted upon after other forms of securing funds have failed. The funding status among them vary, ranging from companies with a mixed funding history to current ACE funding recipients in need of additional funding, recently rejected regular ACE funding recipients¹⁵⁵, conditional ACE funding awardees, pending ACE funding applicants, and repeated unsuccessful applicants of ACE funding. While working on conventional funding means, many of these companies have set up their crowdfunding campaign as part of their contingency plan until it became their only option to ensure the materialization of their project. In all cases, the effort to secure funding from public and private institutions had preceded any consideration to crowdfund.

The reason crowdfunding is the last resort for many established theatre companies has largely to do with their knowledge of institutional funding mechanism. Their

¹⁵⁵ due to changes in funding priorities and budgetary allocation according to regions

familiarity with the application process of institutional funding is, in fact, the very cause for their reluctance to attempt crowdfunding. With most of them having experienced successful applications before, they are therefore more critical of an approach like crowdfunding which relies on the generosity of the public. Familiarity with how institutional funders operate in processing funding applications and their response to fund disbursements have allowed established theatre companies to somewhat predict the next course of action should they fail to secure their bid. Moreover, there is a preference for a definitive funding verdict from institutional funders over the unpredictability for small donations to accumulate from a crowdfunding campaign drive. In fact, seven out of the ten established theatre companies would prefer a clear 'all or nothing' reply from an ACE funding bid over the suspense of an indeterminate crowdfunded outcome. Thus, a wholly successful, or equally, a plain reject from institutional funders outweighs leaving the fate of a project to an unknown amount of crowdfunded donations:

“With a funding body, you know what you are going to get, if you get it. For me, I prefer certainty rather than straining my neck out hoping to catch a fish. I guess maybe it's because of what I'm used to...”

- MK

Furthermore, being accustomed to dealing with institutions has enabled established theatre companies to articulate their intentions in the language of institutional funders, which provides them a better chance of receiving funds in subsequently revised applications. Where companies have failed to receive subsequent funding, this has been due to restrictions in regional quota, oversubscription of the type of work produced in the funding cycle, lack of evidence of social outreach activities, unmet funding criteria in accordance to the latest cultural policy, or clashing sentiments over subject matter. However, by addressing certain shortcomings as commented by institutional funders, applicants

would usually be able to review aspects of the work and resubmit their application, which would finally meet funders' criteria.

Nevertheless, the reluctance to use crowdfunding is not limited to its unfamiliarity compared to previously 'tried and tested' methods. Since seeking donations from members of the public generally goes against the principles of these companies which see arts funding to be the remit of governmental institutions and private bodies with far larger allocations to disburse to the causes they raise, asking donations from the public places them in a moral quandry. Consistently with all the interviews, there was a strong reluctance to ask the public for financial support, such that if crowdfunding had to be pursued, it would mean that all conventional methods known had been employed, and larger resources had been exhausted:

To be honest, I'm not a fan of asking people directly for cash instead of asking people who have got the cash, which is why I've been asking for business sponsorship"

-MK

MK, like other established theatre companies with a more conservative disposition on funding initiatives would only recourse to conventional and more familiar means of funding resources, before considering crowdfunding as an option. Although crowdfunding initially presented companies with a conflicting position, the approach became a necessity when no alternatives could fill in the funding gap, risking companies to compromise their preparation, execution, and production outcomes.

Additionally, seeking donations from their social contacts, strangely feel like misdirecting 'the ask' knowing that it is the duty of the government to finance public goods. Therefore, opting for crowdfunding is not a decision most established theatre companies would take on board without much scrutiny, until they are

required to submit to it, such as the obligatory pre-requisite for institutional funding in a match crowdfunding scheme. Apart from guilt, it frustrates them to comply with a system they do not believe in:

“Crowdfunding is a necessary evil which I appreciate trying to stay away than use it. I’d rather the money coming from the rich and not the poor people who are just getting by.”

- *MK*

The companies interviewed found themselves having to put aside their apprehension about raising funds from the crowd to ensure that projects of high cultural and social importance were not implicated due to the shortage of funding, risked being executed poorly, or forced to substantially reduce the numbers of committed audience-participants. For example, after being rejected for the third time, *MK* turned to crowdfunding to continue on a research and development stage of a play that was coming together from the collaboration with local historians on a new found artefact requiring a revised interpretation that could potentially change their invisible borough into a historically rich political pocket. For *LD*, resorting to crowdfunding has given it a chance to perfect its work and meet a level of artistic excellence as originally envisioned, particularly when the project was aimed at linking local and international audiences and practitioners in the industry. In *SH*’s case, choosing not to raise extra funds from the crowd would mean reducing a significant portion of the cultural and educational offering for the huge numbers of underprivileged young participants who have been involved in their project from the start. Therefore, as illustrated in these cases, the decision to crowdfund was eventually agreed since the alternative would cause productions tremendous loss in investment, value, and participation.

As experienced theatre makers, the continuous pleading through crowdfunding can also feel like begging:

“It felt like I’m begging of my friends and family...oh, I’m really poor!”

- *MT*

which is an embarrassing situation to find themselves in, but an approach that they had to bear to save their projects from being cancelled, infinitely delayed, cut short, or even abandoned before it is given a chance to develop. For most established theatre companies, crowdfunding appears to reduce them from a position of optimizing institutional funding to an unwarranted role of pressing the public to subsidize insitutional agendas. Like its counterparts, *MK* had earlier objected to asking members of the public (whom it believe may not have much themselves) to donate since pursuing crowdfunding felt like displacing the responsibility from funding bodies which hold the allocation of monies meant for financing and incentivizing public good. Thus, the idea of asking average individuals for donations essentially does not sit well with longer established theatre companies which are adamant that the responsibility of arts funding resides largely with the government:

“I find it a bit messy to be asking any Tom, Dick and Harry...and maybe I’m looking at it wrong [...] but money should be coming from the government...they’ve got plenty of money when it comes to funding the war.”

- *MK*

Principally, established theatre companies stand firmly on the ground that the arts should be funded by the state, agencies, organisations and profit-generating entities. In fact, there is a sense that the public should be spared from the responsibility of financially supporting the arts, and the concern that their contribution might make it too easy for the government to relieve itself from the duty of patronage:

“It makes me angry that I have to buy into a system that I don’t really approve of...I do feel that the government should be funding the arts...it makes me worried that they’ll justify cutting arts budget.”

- *MK*

The concern that established theatre companies have about the implication of crowdfunding and the possibility of having to rely more frequently on it was pronounced in their fear of gradually or permanently losing state funding. In comparison, neither the graduate theatre makers nor the individual artists interviewed in this study have expressed a similar unease. Hence, the decision to crowdfund has come with a prolonged hesitation and heavy sense of guilt from asking those not duty-bound to offset the funds for which the government should be providing instead. Persuading the public into the role of funders was seen unfitting, and a way for the government to conveniently evade its rightful duty and stewardship of the sector:

“It is just not right, the government should fund our projects, we are actually doing their work for them”

- *SH*

From a practical perspective, the disinclination to use crowdfunding is also due to time-cost-labour effectiveness, as well as its unsuitability for larger scale projects compared to those produced by graduate theatre makers and individual artists. Their crowdfunding experience foresees that the substantial amount of time, cost and labour in asking and accumulating small amounts from many people as an ineffective funding method resulting in significant loss of time on production and artistic labour:

“I didn’t realize until it was affecting how we work...crowdfunding put a massive stress on the financial input of the company... it also created lost time”

- *JG*

Since the raised amount from crowdfunding formed a small fraction (4% to 10%)¹⁵⁶ of their total production cost, the companies could not view it as a worthwhile, time-cost-labour effective effort compared to institutional funding bids. Only companies able to endure the task of “doing so much but getting very little”¹⁵⁷, understood how crowdfunding fared as an alternative funding approach:

“It’s very, very hard...for the amount of input, you get very little output...it’s almost like shooting birds at night in a country where here aren’t many birds”

- *SH*

Moreover, for projects larger in scale and higher in cost, asking a huge amount from the public placed an unrealistic expectation of “asking for a small amount from many people” by having to stretch the solicitations far enough to secure the amount their projects needed. Hence, it was common to see established theatre companies crowdfunding for only a small part of their project, such as to supplement their research and development phase, or as an appendage to their outreach initiative, rather than the bigger fraction of their production cost as seen in some of the crowdfunding effort of graduate theatre companies and individual artists.

Established theatre companies have also been discouraged by other online fundraising campaign concerns. Triggered by long gaps in funding phases and online backing inactivity, a few companies have reverted to offline, direct and hands-on funding strategies which amount they then transacted into the campaign page to add momentum to the flow of giving¹⁵⁸. Sluggish funding traffic has even pushed companies to channel funds not only from their external fundraising

¹⁵⁶ *SH* raised about 4% of total productions cost through crowdfunding while *LD* and *MK* raised 7% and 10%, respectively. ‘Small fraction’ is a relative comparison the crowdfunding donations raised by graduate theatre companies and sole traders. The amount raised was considered small by their standard.

¹⁵⁷ as described by *SH*

¹⁵⁸ as done by *MA* and *HS*

activities, but also their own savings, or loans, into their crowdfunding campaigns as project deadlines drew near. The pressure particularly intensified when uneasiness began setting in with the approaching deadline for match crowdfunding whereby the inability to meet a certain funding threshold within a given duration means losing the allocated institutional funds offered.

The dilemma of established theatre companies was compounded by the novel challenges and uncertainties of the public's response towards the image brought on by their use of crowdfunding itself. While a successful crowdfunding campaign could reflect positively on a company's resilience and resourcefulness, there is no guarantee against the possibility of a lukewarm response to its effort since poor funds collection may reflect negatively on its capacity to draw crowd support, thereby questioning its ability to obtain public validation with possible consequences on institutional validation.

Added to the anxiety of online failure is the difficulty to escape from the permanence of its digital footprint even if it is possible to avert public attention with a successful campaign later on. As exemplified in the case of *MA*, a company's successful second attempt can attest to its resilience for rising from past oversight and returning to the scene stronger. Raising an extremely modest amount in its first crowdfunding campaign (11%) has forced *MA* to ensure that its second campaign was a success (101%). As for *MK*, although not a reflection of its position as a recipient of institutional funding, the amount raised in its first crowdfunding campaign (24%) was fatefully followed by an unsuccessful second crowdfunding campaign (0%). Following this, *MK* made a surprising return with its third crowdfunding project raising £1040 (104%). Meanwhile, in a true alignment of 'success begets success', *SH*'s ability to meet its funding target in the first

crowdfunding campaign was subsequently followed by two more equally successful campaigns, consistently raising between £1500 to £1700 for each project, while also receiving continuous commissions and institutional funding grants. Hence, depending on how established theatre companies look at the outcome of their crowdfunding campaigns in relation to other sources of funding they receive outside the campaign, there is pressure to reach a respectable funding target despite their regards for crowdfunding as merely a tool for temporary, small financial assistance. For companies perceiving crowdfunding as more than an enabler for projects at risk, the approach demonstrates organizational resilience in their capacity to garner the trust of institutional funders through the signification of grit and adaptability in times of austerity.

Understandably, a ‘failed’ crowdfunding campaign would have harsher repercussions on established theatre companies than newer theatre companies, since it could be misread as organizational incompetence, and potentially the lack of public and industry relevance of their productions, signalling the companies’ lack of worth (Agrawal and Catalini, 2014). It is partly the reputational risk from unwanted campaign outcomes that pressures established theatre companies into utilizing all means possible to ensure a reasonable amount is raised even if the target sum is not achieved. At the very least, companies aim for an acceptable funding threshold that is eventually met without the campaign being perceived as a ‘failed’ endeavour. In the cases examined, after a poor crowdfunding response in its first attempt, *MA* had taken huge measures in its second crowdfunding campaign to ensure a better funding outcome by employing a producer to oversee its fundraising effort, in its aim to also qualify for ACE match funding¹⁵⁹. As a

¹⁵⁹ *MA*’s first crowdfunding reached 11% of its target but after the exchange rate, the company ended owing the crowdfunding platform a small amount. In contrast, its second crowdfunding campaign was overfunded at 101%, raising £5060 under the ACE match crowdfunding scheme.

regular ACE funding recipient, *MK*'s first crowdfunding met only a quarter of its funding target but it received news of successful ACE funding application shortly after the campaign ended. In this case, the crowdfunding campaign was seen as a precursor to securing institutional funding, and a reflection of the company's resourcefulness to counter its earlier funding rejection. Unlike the belated crowdfunding success *MA* and *MK*, institutional funding recipients *LD* (£2545) and *GC* (£5400) both raised substantial amount of donations from their first crowdfunding campaign, allowing them to deliver improved aspects of the production beyond the ones they initially campaigned. Although with a 50% collection *LD*'s highly experimental project involving higher educational institutions did not meet its funding target, the funds raised has helped to meet its production objectives, and along the way, promoted its work more extensively, thus, contributing to a tour in the following year. *LD*'s second crowdfunding project, however, did not receive as much response but it provided enough traction for a reprise of the production from its first crowdfunding campaign after two years. As for *GC*, its 'instrumental meets avant-garde' production has kept the company busy with tours and gig invitations, and has yet had to crowdfund since. Hence, considerations for crowdfunding success would really depend on the post-crowdfunding repercussions rather than the percentage of target reach at the end of a campaign. While the platform provides a numerical figure of backers' response to online giving, it is neither an indication of the accomplishments that take place offline nor the opportunities that follow in the years to come as a result of the traction. Although the way crowdfunding plays out appears arbitrary, support from the community and institutional levels can be seen to attract the flow of funding from each other as underlined by the appeal of project significance to the broader

grassroots alongside their novel contribution to the field, as exemplified in the cases above¹⁶⁰.

Aside from the unforeseen outcomes of a crowdfunding campaign, however, there is a general sense that the crowdfunding experience has been valuable:

“We had to reach our target of £5000 to receive £2,500...which in a way made things more difficult...I emailed everyone...kept posting on *Facebook* everyday. It went up slowly but not quite good enough, and the other is the end date of the campaign, which was a week before Christmas...people were not interested in reading what was on their *Facebook* anymore.”

- MA

In an unexpected way, crowdfunding has also revealed theatre makers' biggest supporters:

“The good thing is that it showed me that I have so much support from the people that I know”

- JG

In fact, a closer observation and further inference from the patterns of giving among their backers has surfaced a touching truth that individuals who have donated to their projects were not, to their knowledge, wealthy people, but those who have decided to donate, nevertheless:

“What I found generally is that people with a lot of money didn't give anything or gave very little. People who had little money kept giving because they wanted to support me.”

- MA

The experience with crowdfunding has further reinforced their view on charitable giving where individuals with little to give were more inclined to donate, thus, highlighting the absence of support from institutional and private entities with the actual financial position to contribute to the sector:

“And here we are...all of us...the deprived helping the deprived...the poorer you are...the more you give the beggars.”

- MK

¹⁶⁰ The production by MA and MK both contribute new historical accounts, while both productions by LD and GC contribute new artistic methodologies. Among the four, GC's crowdfunded production has a family appeal that overrides the production of the other three theatre companies.

As established enterprises, raising funds from their social contacts is not a dilemma-free situation and certainly a decision they wished they did not have to make. Hence, it can be said that due to their familiarity and experience of dealing with institutional funders, established theatre companies were less inclined to use crowdfunding for funding purposes, particularly after weighing how the effort that the approach demanded would cost valuable time on the production itself. However, left without a choice, crowdfunding had become their only saviour with quite surprising outcomes.

8.2 Digital Immigrants and Late Entrants to the Crowdfunding Scene

As a generation of digital immigrants, most established theatre makers have joined the crowdfunding bandwagon relatively late. While few founders of established theatre companies have prepared, launched, and managed the crowdfunding campaign themselves¹⁶¹, most preferred to outsource the task to their tech-savvy members or administrative staff¹⁶² as the skills to coverge new media and maximize the reach of potential backers were assumed as second nature to most of them. While they tend to provide the contents for the campaign themselves, technical aspects involving videography, vlogging, social media updating are assigned to personnels whose jobs include the more tedious tasks requiring long hours of compiling social contacts, sending links to potential backers, and following up on donations to thank their backers. In this way, they could devote to the artistic demands of the production, while overseeing the response to their campaign from time to time.

¹⁶¹ as seen in the cases of *KJ*, *LD*, *MK*

¹⁶² in the cases of *MA* and *SH*

With an embedded digital immigrant mindset, established theatre companies were initially doubtful of crowdfunding while some have remained suspicious of the approach. As a result, the group in general has not held crowdfunding with high regards as the graduate theatre companies and individual artists in this study. However, despite the lack of confidence they have about crowdfunding, established theatre companies somehow felt a strong need to “get on board¹⁶³” and discover what “all the hype is about¹⁶⁴”. They were more vigilant throughout their campaigns besides being more vocal about crowdfunding being devastatingly “admin and resource heavy”¹⁶⁵. Despite the effort to expand their social media reach, in their view, crowdfunding had only drawn in people they already knew to donate to the campaign, instead of helping them form new contacts as they had earlier hoped:

“I don’t think they were people we didn’t know...we mostly know who our funders are”

- SH

Consequently, established theatre companies were less moved by donations from old acquaintances to their projects compared to individual artists who had especially shown their excitement and gratitude for the same gesture.

Interviews with established theatre companies, however, revealed that while there were random individuals backers, even unknown backers from across the continent, unlike graduate theatre companies and individual artists who tend to treasure these newly formed relationships as a milestone, established theatre makers appeared to be less thrilled about such instances and were more inclined to perceive donations from random backers as mere chance¹⁶⁶. Nevertheless, when resorting to crowdfunding, established theatre makers have found

¹⁶³ as described by LD

¹⁶⁴ as described by MA

¹⁶⁵ as described by SH

¹⁶⁶ whereby backers happened to browse the platform and stumbled upon their campaign

themselves updating their list of contacts database, and paying more attention to their genuine supporters¹⁶⁷, which are aspects of individual giving they have not given much thought previously.

Part of this indifference among established theatre companies is likely due to the amount of funding they have considered based on their larger operational cost, and financial commitment involving salaried staff, which could not be rectified by arbitrary amounts raised through crowdfunding. While crowdfunding could be a significant help to younger and smaller companies concerned with 'getting by' from project-to-project, the scenario is different for established theatre companies with multiple projects usually fixed for the coming years, and being fully aware that soliciting donations from their networks would clearly not suffice in meeting the substantial costs involved. Hence, for most, getting on board crowdfunding was more a consideration for a larger strategy of resilience, an operational capacity expansion to exercise plural funding in line with the encouragement of ACE and the government, and an experimentation with a possible future of regular online fundraising (not necessarily crowdfunding) as part of a long-term sustainability for the company.

The view that established theatre companies have towards crowdfunding was also shaped by them overseeing multiple projects concurrently through various partnerships, which did not leave them much room for contemplation with regards to the response of backers. Due to the sheer number of past and on-going projects, it was more difficult for established theatre companies to measure the impact of their crowdfunding campaign besides the amount of funds raised, and identify if the increased exposure of their company has a direct connection to it,

¹⁶⁷ those who would potentially continue to donate

unless they have managed to study the numbers consistently with each campaign. For example, *SH* felt that its third crowdfunding campaign has raised the company's profile, something that was not as noticeable after their first or second campaign. When *SH* was able to finally embed its crowdfunding campaign along with its posts on social media platforms, the company felt that it has begun to see an increase in response. With identifiable gradual rise from its first, second, and third crowdfunding projects, crowdfunding is currently one of its official mixed funding means¹⁶⁸.

As illustrated earlier, the fear of missing out is apparent among established theatre companies despite their ambivalence towards crowdfunding. Realizing that crowdfunding is "a trendy and hip American thing" that had swept the nation, *MK* had dived straight into the approach to finance another of its newly developed historical piece after its first ACE rejection in many years. Having attempted crowdfunding for the first time (raising £526), it gave *MK*, great pleasure afterwards to share its learning experience with crowdfunding at a workshop offering an introductory mentoring held locally for theatre makers and community leaders. Understanding the meaningful support from its official and unofficial partners who were committed to see the production come to life, *MK*, has since weighed the possibility of using crowdfunding again with a tighter grip on managing the campaign the next time around.

Like *MK*, crowdfunding was also a learning curve, and particularly a steep one for *MA*. *MA*'s first crowdfunding campaign left the company with hardly anything after the deduction of the platform's service charges. *MA* later learned that it had made the wrong choice of platform which was not convenient for local backers to donate,

¹⁶⁸ *SH*'s first crowdfunding campaign raised £1520, while its second raised £1680, with 37 and 62 backers respectively.

especially since when it launched its campaign almost two years earlier, crowdfunding was not as ubiquitous compared to when it launched its second campaign. With the second campaign, *MA* realized that potential backers among its circle of friends with interest in the subject matter of the play are mostly in their sixties, hence, were not as familiar with the idea of crowdfunding, and how it operates, including how donations can be transacted digitally through the platform to their company. Some were not even aware that *MA* was raising funds for its theatre project and as *MA* later discovered, many of its eager supporters did not know that crowdfunding was even “a thing”¹⁶⁹. Ultimately, with a positive response from a trust and a national society at the final hour, *MA* was able to raise enough funds through crowdfunding to be matched by the ACE, and managed to end the production with the smallest loss it has ever had, which was a huge success for *MA* as a largely self-funded company whose experience of smaller institutional funding has previously not included funding from ACE.

From the interviews, it was clear that crowdfunding was an inevitable phase in which established theatre companies felt the need to reassess, regardless of their mixed feelings and differing principles on the approach. The ubiquity of crowdfunding provided an incentive even for companies already set in their ways to try the method, although their familiarity with conventional funding procedures and processes could not stop them from the constant comparison. Nevertheless, while the scepticism towards crowdfunding has influenced their late entry to the scene, they later found themselves promoting their work across media more extensively than usual as part of the campaign process. As some of these companies discovered, while the funds raised through crowdfunding might be minimal, the effort that has gone through the campaign drives seemed to also have

¹⁶⁹ from the interview with *AM*

advantageous repercussions on their reputation which has persuaded them to reconsider their earlier stand on crowdfunding. Therefore, while many have started sceptically, their experience with crowdfunding has thrown them a learning curve by forcing them to reassess the opportunities that could emerge in its post-crowdfunding stage.

8.3 Cultural Leadership and Multiple Partnerships

The positions of established theatre companies as cultural leaders and partners in a number of collaborative ventures have acquired them the reputation capable of gathering grassroots and institutional support, which increases the likelihood of meeting their crowdfunding targets. From the interviews, established theatre companies can be divided into teams of theatre makers who started out as graduate theatre companies immediately after completing their studies, and those who have set up their company after exploring the industry on their own. The first group is made of theatre makers who had studied at the same university or underwent similar training, whose dream of starting a company is strongly rooted in their connection to the alma mater. As companies expand, some have taken on board new members with complementary skills and talent. Meanwhile, the second group tends to be founded later after members have gained significant professional experience, sometimes with renowned names in the field before they were brought together through professional network. While the advantage of the first team is their shared membership as alumna and thus, strength in their affiliation with the university's institutional reputation, the advantage of the second team lies in their varying levels of social capital and almost by default, a more heterogeneous network of contacts, affiliations and support system that have come from the diversity of their earlier work experiences. Nevertheless, provided that both types of established companies continue to nurture engagement at the

community and institutional levels as they grow, companies with a higher cumulative heterogeneous network of social capital would tend to attract more institutional funding, and demonstrate similar success with their crowdfunding solicitations.

SH, for example, was formed by fellow university-trained theatre alumni whose combined specialization and shared values on education and equal opportunities for young people in the city had developed when they were studying for their undergraduate degree. The concern for cultural deprivation having an impact on educational experience has had *SH* increasingly focussed on a participatory approach to theatre in their projects for schools over the years, while their expertise in collaborative carnival and festival performances have resumed in the city where the company was founded. Hence, individually, and as an ensemble, *SH* was already a reputable company with significant networks of social capital between them by the time they first crowdfunded for the outreach component of their project.

SH's first crowdfunding campaign came after an earlier campaign ran by the local arts centre as one-third of the project's collaborators. Taking the lead artistic role, *SH* was working with a youth theatre group whose performance would be the highlight of the city's revival festival. The festival, which intended to engage the public with the remembrance of a momentous historical event came with a heterogeneous support that were expected from all levels of social capital through the shared networks of *SH*'s artistic circles, parents, and neighbours of the youths involved, patrons of the local arts centre, members of the history society, and the institutional capital of the local council. The heterogeneous dimension in the levels of social capital involved was indicative of the multi-layered support their

crowdfunding campaigns ended receiving, considering the horizontal and vertical network structures of the event collaborators which cut across familial, friendship, community and institutions. This marked the beginning for *SH*'s crowdfunding campaigns in the next three consecutive years¹⁷⁰, based on its capacity as a local company of nineteen years to fundraise for unexpected expenses in projects aimed at the participation of young performers and school children in their exploration of science and well-being through physical theatre. Since crowdfunding three times or more is extremely rare, *SH*'s case has presented the opportunity to explain the reason for continuous backing of its projects as the manifestations of a combination of heterogeneous levels of social capital, but also its ability to balance experimental and instrumental theatrical projects in its repertoire of work and productions¹⁷¹.

Meanwhile, *LD* is an established theatre company founded after its members have gathered separate artistic experience. With all members trained abroad, *LD* was able to mass social capital from heterogeneous networks, encompassing previous and current professional connections across Australia, UK and most of Europe. Hence, by the time *LD* crowdfunded for the first time to help pay for an extra week of rehearsal space, there were already crowds excited to see the production materialized. The campaign was helped by the extra buzz created at the universities where the lead member has been teaching, and at a professional dance company where he is concurrently artist in residence. Additionally, *LD*'s crowdfunding campaign received backing from its collective partnerships with art venues in the northern and southern regions of the country where the company usually performs.

¹⁷⁰ raising between £1500 to £1700 each time within a brief duration of 28 days

¹⁷¹ *SH* develops experimental work with its educational and creative partners (related to science and digital technology) while continues to run instrumental-based theatre projects (related to cultural access of young people) and community/city-based projects through commissions.

Both situations demonstrate a clear institutional advantage that established theatre companies have over graduate theatre companies and individual artists. Having been in the industry for some time, links formed through multiple collaborative efforts have afforded established theatre companies with expansive and highly networked social capital. By this virtue, established theatre companies are ready contenders for crowdfunding judged by their propensity to draw greater support, and therefore, larger donations to their campaigns.

As cultural leaders, established theatre companies are mostly in the position to offer mentoring roles for aspiring theatre makers, providing opportunities for internships in various aspects of operation and production. As experienced industry players, the guidance and tutelage of new artists has not merely been an exercise of cognitive capital but also of reputational capital that companies emanate. Built into these relationships is access to each other's social networks, as exemplified in the support of former trainees for projects by established mentors. This partly explains the reason crowdfunding campaigns by established theatre companies tend to have individuals from past encounters donating to return the favour they had previously received and/or to acknowledge their enduring social ties.

Another characteristic of most established theatre companies is their strong local presence, which similarly identifies them as forces of cultural authority in the city where they have established their practice. Grown into maturity in their respective locality, the productions by these companies have often become part of the local cultural offering with which communities have been acquainted, and their communal roles which institutions have acknowledged. As advocates in their fields, most of the established theatre companies interviewed have had their work

commissioned at some point, signalling the value that institutions have entrusted upon them. Together, associational and community support have privileged seasoned theatre makers with the capacity to raise a comparatively higher donation at a shorter duration than newer companies. Where productions have been initially self-funded, peer, community and associational support would eventually help draw in institutional funding.

Having developed and specialized in particular artistic methodology and practice, which encapsulate their artistic intent over the years, most established theatre companies are experts in their respective fields. For many, their reputation has garnered them large following and recognition locally, regionally and abroad, which symbiotically reinforced their capacity to capture various forms of aid. In shaping the cultural landscape, news of cultural leaders falling short of funding has culminated in strong grassroots response. As seen in the cases examined, support at the base speaks volumes of project's relevance, with the capacity to attract and restore institutional funding. More commonly for established theatre companies, the legitimacy accounted by institutional funding as partial or conditional recipient of public funding would complementarily crowd-in grassroots support as the latter was able to judge the companies from their past accomplishments and the importance of the projects to the larger community. With the success of past productions, crowdfunding appeals are seen as shared concerns and legitimate requests to be shouldered together¹⁷².

Expansive repertoire of multiple partnerships, which alliances are capable of drawing in associational benefits through shared professional networks justify the varied communal links that many established theatre companies can rely on. In

¹⁷² This is evident in the cases of *LD*, *MA*, *MK*, and *SH*.

fact, companies which were able to meet their crowdfunding targets have been shown to work on multiple projects simultaneously, with active coordination of programmes spread between commercial, non-profit, and outreach projects targeting at different groups for different team collaborations. This information is typically publicly assessible and explained clearly on their webpages, with events locked into their calendar across several artistic strands, informing their artistic and social intent¹⁷³. Aside from the commissioning work, participation in local, regional or international events, part of such repertoire usually includes running scheduled workshops for different group target groups¹⁷⁴, which represents their more permanent cultural offering. Together, they outline the commitment the companies have set out to meet which reflects on their credibility and recognition for cultural work. Thus, established theatre companies are in the position to maximize their standing when it comes to crowdfunding due to their ready access to networks of backers at grassroots and institutional levels that far exceeds those of the graduate theatre companies and individual artists interviewed.

To illustrate, after almost two decades of experience in the industry, *SH* has developed its signature in immersive theatre incorporating the physical space and the digital. Through experiences with past projects, the company has found its artistic alliance with two partners companies complementary to its own: a space transformative company specializing in décor, costumes, and designs; and a post-digital art company specializing in audience immersion. As a cluster, their distinct skills have helped inject, translate and harmonize each other's artistic innovation, hence, giving them wider exposure as 'a package deal' in theatre logistics. Functioning as a cluster, they were able to work in alliance with other companies as they complement each other's skills and resources. Therefore, having a team of

¹⁷³ as state in the campaign page and website of *GC, JG, LD, LH, MA, SA, and SH*

¹⁷⁴ such as those tailored for children, youth, and young adults

associates demonstrate the ability to be independent when working on their own project, and become a team player when merging would benefit all parties. Essentially, this entails the shared and interchangeable networks that could readily provide support for established theatre companies when the needs arise, such as their crowdfunding appeal.

Meanwhile, in its education division, *SH* has been working in partnerships with a science education department at a local university in a series of devised work aimed at engaging and enriching the understanding of science through artistic expression, involving the participation from regional associations bodies as part of a larger campaign to encourage more girls into STEM¹⁷⁵. The work that *SH* has been running with its school yearly school programme with participation from children and youth in culturally deprived areas has simultaneously channelled into both areas of work and beyond. With the school project, *SH*'s other collaborators have included the university's arts centre whereas for a particular year when *SH* had to crowdfund for the transportation for thousands of their project participants, it has earlier formed a supportive creative partnership with the local museum and gallery as part of its programme module. This effort was coordinated with school workshops as well as seminars, and extended further into master classes facilitated by *SH*'s creative local and London partners specializing in physical, masks and pop-up theatres whereby each has a specific role to play within their larger aim of cultural inclusion. The creative partnership came together based on their common repertoire of having worked with schools, shared interest for visual innovation and generating a relationship with the city, all of which have exceeded their effort in their first crowdfunding campaign¹⁷⁶ and drove backers to support *SH* again in their second campaign. With the project in its fourth year, the strategic

¹⁷⁵ acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

¹⁷⁶ where they collaborated with the local theatre venues and a historical festival commemorating the city

alliance between multiple networks of artistic, educational and local government have further gained public trust which eased reciprocal giving to *HS*'s repeated crowdfunding campaigns with backers who share their sentiment, and collectively cooperate to ensure that the projects raised the amount they deserve.

The case of established theatre companies shows their journey into the maturity stage of their enterprise where most are in the process of looking forward to obtaining dependable, longer lasting sources of funding and minimize future funding concerns. While crowdfunding has served to relieve episodes of funding shortage, the ultimate aim for established theatre companies is to be able to place priority on their art and what it can contribute to the public rather than the distress of where the next funding might come from. Due to theatre makers' existing and substantial experience with the operatives of institutional funding, resorting to crowdfunding for projects aligned to institutional outcomes have generally presented them with a dilemma when donations have to be sought from individual members of the public to achieve institutional objectives. Overall, crowdfunding seems to be a system that established theatre companies have had to make peace with in order to continue producing, and sustain their enterprise.

8.4 Backers of Theatre Projects by Established Theatre Companies

The breakdown of donations raised through crowdfunding illustrates that established theatre companies have benefitted from a favourable combination of bottom-up and top-down support of their social capital. Evidently, online backing to their projects have largely come from the communal and institutional levels, with horizontal networks larger in magnitude than those of individual artists', and vertical networks weighing heavily on the validation of associative social capital and institutional funders. Considering their vast experience and rich repertoire,

backers' readiness to donate to projects by established theatre companies have been shaped by the impression of the companies' previous accomplishments, and accordingly, the reputation they have built as cultural assets to their locality while also striking a balance between artistic and social aims.

8.4.1 Family Capital

Backers among family members are the fewest for the established theatre companies interviewed. This is mostly a direct result of excluding family members in the solicitation of funds despite the necessity to crowdfund their project(s). Noticeably, the bigger the companies, the more reluctant they are to ask from family members, and to consider asking for donations appropriate. Moreover, as current recipients or former recipients of public funding, the highly connected position of many established theatre companies has afforded them financial contribution from their professional, rather than personal connections. Hence, relative to the severity of their funding circumstances, established theatre makers have chosen to spare their families from the obligation to give although some family members have stepped in to donate when they identify with the urgency of the ask and recognize the noble cause and/or the aesthetic value of the project.

Sporadically, donations have come from wealthier siblings, distant contacts, and kin-like relations with no immediate connection to the theatre scene essentially because backers themselves felt a strong need to help. Established theatre makers have sometimes unexpectedly received generous online backing from family members who learned of their repeated rejections of ACE funding, and similarly the potential lost to the community if sufficient funding could not be secured in time for the project to fully take place. With match crowdfunding, the extra push factor has mustered a stronger concern for known contacts of theatre

makers to donate, particularly when the funding target is close to the qualifying amount. Families, especially, have stepped in as last-minute saviours to tilt the collection and ensure that the project gets to maximize the funding for which it is eligible. Mostly, the backing from families, even when they have not been asked to donate, represents their organic solidarity, shown as a way of comforting and assuring theatre makers of continuous and unrelenting support during financially trying times from people who understand how much the production means to them, and empathize with how far they have come to sustain their enterprise.

8.4.2 Friendship Network

Friends who backed theatre projects by established theatre companies are largely individuals engaged in related work spheres. In the sphere of training and clientele, donations for established theatre companies have come from their former interns, trainees, workshop participants, resident artists, apprentices, and understudies as expression of gratitude and appreciation, in reciprocation of their mentorship and tutelage. In the more vertical network structure, backers tend to be artists and creatives whose job scope and expertise intersect with these theatre makers, usually as work acquaintances in previous projects or partners in the same artistic clusters¹⁷⁷. It is more common for established theatre companies to have online backing from theatre producers in high profile arts establishment, associates in media and publishing, as well as newer theatre companies whose members have been under their tutelage. This mix of professional connections demonstrates both their heterogeneous network structures, which are highly desirable social capital assets that individual artists, and especially graduate theatre makers have yet to acquire.

¹⁷⁷ such as a triadic affiliation of performance-propmaster–events management specialists

Concurrently, support for established theatre companies have also originated from the multiple and embedded social network of their founding and associate members whose combined social capital cuts across localities, regions, and countries, as well as associations through artistic training and professional practice. Together, they add layers to a richly textured and hybridized system of support that brings along with them more opportunities to fill the gaps in the companies' "structural holes" (Burt, 2001). Their divergent artistic engagement aside, where established theatre makers have decided to campaign solo¹⁷⁸, their single network struggled with meeting the funding target in comparison to companies which crowdfunded as ensembles, hence, pointing to the strength of fusing their social capital together.

Donations from friends in the 'upper' artistic circle tend to be higher in amount (£250 to £1000), generally given in solidarity of support for the greater artistic and social aims of a project, and often as a gesture of mutual respect and encouragement during financially testing times, which alludes to mechanical solidarity¹⁷⁹. Among artistic friends who donated were also those returning the favour to their earlier crowdfunding project as a reciprocal exchange that also speaks of their common struggle in the plight of arts funding¹⁸⁰. However, with professional theatre making experience of ten years or more, the majority of friends who have donated to these companies' crowdfunding projects tend to be limited to those from the artistic sphere, indicating a closed, homophilous network of bonding social capital of individuals like themselves, whom they already knew:

"I know they are also artists...I'd recognized from the last thing I've supported"

- JG

¹⁷⁸ as have *MK*

¹⁷⁹ as seen in the case of *MA*, *MK*, and *SH*

¹⁸⁰ as seen in cases of *JG*, *MA*, *MK*, and *SH*

In contrast to the guilt of receiving donations from close personal relations, donations received from known professionals and reputable names in the industry has the opposite effect on established theatre companies since it suggests their ability to capture the attention of vertical social networks¹⁸¹, signalling the establishment of their linking social capital, which functions as an incentive to broker their professional connection and artistic alliance where their missions may align, giving way to new opportunities.

8.4.3 Community Capital

Most established theatre companies have built a legacy of engagement with various communities, and numerous cultural projects over their years of existence involving local authorities and community leaders whereby their forte is sought on occasion to drive public participation such as festivals, social change campaigns, health and sporting events. For companies whose productions tend to lean towards instrumentality, their role as cultural leaders has been prominent in promoting cultural experience and community welfare in their respective localities¹⁸². In most cases, their identity as striving local theatre companies has gradually elevated them into legitimate cultural producers whose survival in the industry at a time of fiscal crisis has somewhat become part of the local rescue agenda, such that it is not surprising to find neighbours and community leaders among their demography of backers. Choosing not to donate to near successful match funding projects, especially, would seem to deprive the beneficiaries of their art, with the possible loss of public good that communities could have otherwise benefit. Linked by interest and purpose, this layer of social capital represents the

¹⁸¹ *LD* has expressed that its backers include “a few people from X project are friends from X company that sort of love to see the project”

¹⁸² A backer for *MA* wrote on 11/12/2006 on the campaign page that: “This is a great and important work, and I wish this project every success”.

extension to organic and mechanical social solidarity, united by a shared cause and goal for the community as a whole.

Established theatre companies which have managed to crowdfund more than once, demonstrated an added quality compared to non-repeaters. They thrived mainly due to accumulating reciprocities based on trust, reputation and community social capital as seen in their layers of extended network in their heterogeneous ties consisting of a horizontal and vertical structural mix. Due to their bridging and brokerage social capital, some established theatre companies have managed to secure sponsorships from local businesses, which include financial resources from local estate agents, hairdressers, and cafes. While the extent of their audience reach and influence in the community has helped align private sponsors to the local target market, they have also benefitted from their partnership, setting the tone for possible future arrangements whereby both can continue to reciprocate in a win-win alliance.

Founded typically by those born and bred in the locality where they practice, or commuting cities where they have formed partnerships with other clusters of local arts organizations long enough to become their second homes, established theatre makers have the advantage of community knowledge accumulated over time. Knowing communities in the boroughs and various parts of the city well has entrusted established theatre companies with roles in the cultural development and engagement in these areas¹⁸³. Thus, the backing for their crowdfunding campaigns has, at times, been a direct spillover from the visibility of their roles in the local community, which in turn, opens up opportunities for institutional connections¹⁸⁴,

¹⁸³ *MA*, *MK*, and *SH* are all locals and known in the city they live for their repertoire of work and theatrical expertise.

¹⁸⁴ such as a mix of clubs/associations – theatre venues – universities – dance studios – health organizations

and collaboration that often feeds back into the community. Such cooperation presents an ideal mix of horizontal and vertical network structures of bonding, bridging and opportunities for linking social capital, where different parties can strategically the operating in silos. With these highly embedded connections, established theatre companies are usually only a step away from securing institutional support.

8.4.4 Institutional Capital

With experience in the industry spanning over a decade or more, institutional social capital is the core strength of established theatre companies' productivity and longevity. Most of the established theatre companies have had substantive experience of dealing with institutional funding whether as successful funding recipients or as rejected applicants. Their institutional funding has not been limited to the ACE, the National Lottery, or the local council, but has also included trusts and foundations, charitable organizations and networks, the department of education, universities, research institutes, the police department, and practitioner networks. For established theatre companies, crowdfunding for their project while receiving institutional support has two implications. Firstly, the knowledge that they were concurrently recipients of institutional funding had encouraged financial backing for the crowdfunding project through the signalling of institutional trust and artistic legitimacy. Nevertheless, backers have also shown great empathy in helping theatre companies bridged their way to institutional funding like in the case of match crowdfunding, demonstrating a crowding-in scenario, particularly when the promised funding amount was within reach.

In the rare occasions where a company has been able to crowdfund three times in three consecutive years, its ability to draw continuous financial support has been

preceded with extended and embedded connections built from its repertoire of previous productions, regular on-going workshops, frequent festival appearances, and active roles in community building. With a close connection at the grassroots, the company has managed to keep a record of continuous institutional funding, which in turn, strengthens its reputation and capacity to draw in support whenever it is needed. From the interviews, the tenacity of established theatre companies can be clearly identified in their capacity to secure institutional social capital and therefore, the influence that this layer of support has in drawing donations from all other levels of social capital. At the community-institutional juncture where grassroots support meets top-down support, established theatre companies are at the position of advantage to balance the policy aims of institutions with the concerns of communities while maintaining their artistic autonomy. For an example of backers' demography see **DIAGRAM 11**. **DIAGRAM 12** provides a visual representation of the overall weightage of financial contribution for projects by the established theatre companies interviewed.

Having presented the findings from the three categories of theatre companies by highlighting their respective usage of crowdfunding, composition of crowdfunders and motivation for support, I continue next with a synthesis of their experience and patterns of online backing to deliberate on the ways being funded by the crowd alters the theatre landscape

DIAGRAM 11: Backers of SH's Theatre Project

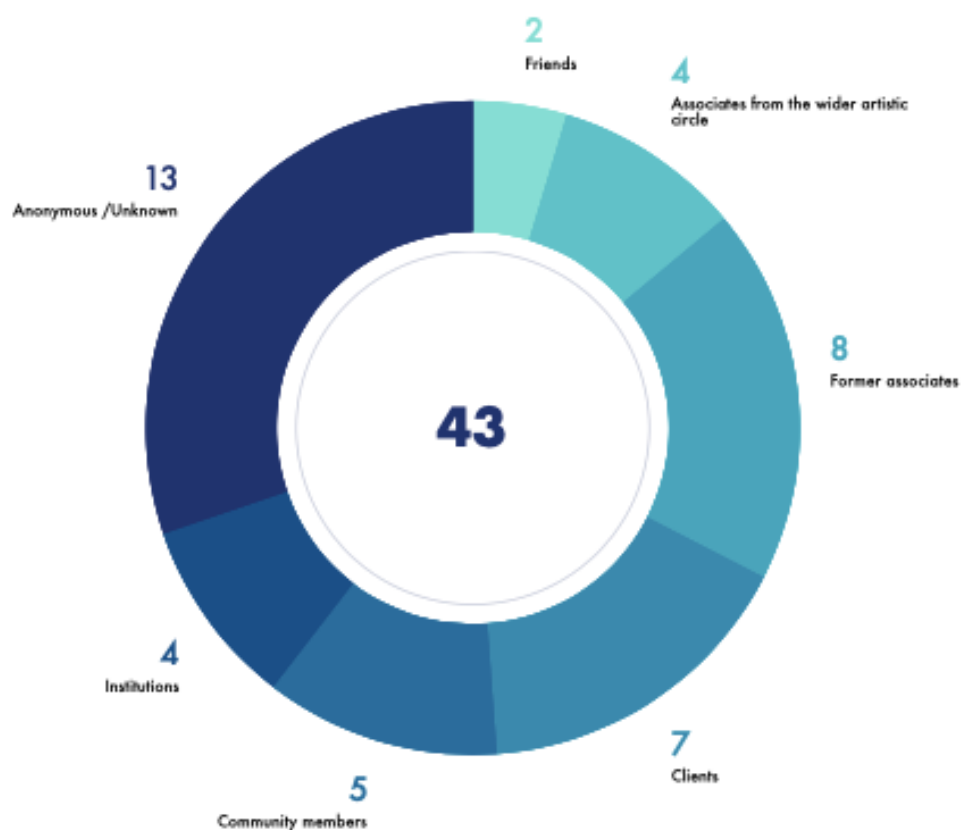
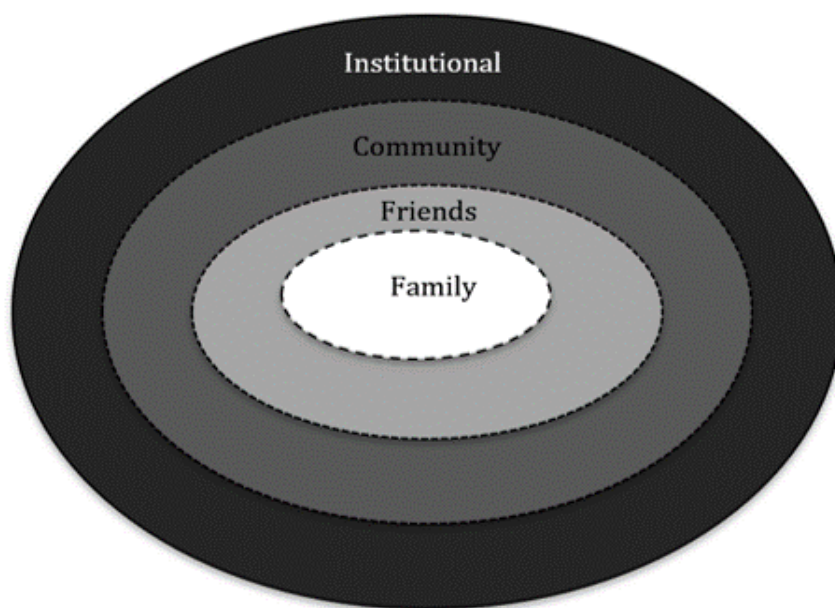


DIAGRAM 12: Representation of online backing of Established Theatre Companies



Chapter 9

DISCUSSION

In addressing the research questions, the discussion will be organised around a micro- / meso- / macro- structure. Discussing from this expanding structure aims to draw the connections more clearly from individual giving which accumulates in increasing numbers, and consequently, illustrating that in their cohorts, their transactions shift the dynamics of the larger landscape of theatre production. I will therefore begin by looking at theatre makers, as initiators in the chain of reciprocity, and whose fundraising campaigns through crowdfunding gathered the response of backers towards their theatre projects, eventually allowing these aims to materialize.

9.1 Re-contextualizing Access to Funding, Democratization of Entry, and Cultural Participation

The effect that crowdfunding has on the UK theatre funding ecosystem can be seen in its pragmatic response towards structural barriers of public funding by turning to the potential financial resources gathered from the accumulation of small individual giving. As an approach, crowdfunding may not be ideal but its ubiquity as a digital infrastructure that eases the transactional process of fundraising has given it a very public front that legitimizes, and even normalizes the solicitation of financial support for artistic endeavours. Faced with the rejection of public funding due to ineligibility of criteria, or difficulties in fulfilling conditional funding requirements, crowdfunding presents theatre makers with a possible (albeit temporary) solution by rescuing projects from non-materialization (in the articulation of new work through its eventual production), non-participation (in the wider theatre ecology), and non-utility (in serving its target audience and the larger

community). Regardless of the immediate motivation for giving¹⁸⁵, crowdfunding inadvertently supports the artistic freedom to develop and oversee the completion of new productions (with opportunities for touring and beyond), otherwise impeded by austerity measures.

Without the combination of what is institutionally considered a satisfactory record of artistic experience, a history of healthy financial record, and evidence of public engagement in their proposed project, applicants among theatre newcomers and late entrants are faced with a catch-22 situation where they are likely to find themselves suspended in a perpetual cycle of creative immobility, one that is especially difficult to break away with limited access to institutional funding. The lack of financial resources would be challenging for these theatre makers to produce work without practical consequences on their production, forcing them to possibly compromise on the aesthetics. Meanwhile, to substantially focus on the financial side of their production would mean that the time dedicated to artistic labour is sacrificed in the process of capital accumulation. Conversely, concentrating on artistic labour at the expense of building a 3-year positive cashflow would not guarantee a successful ACE funding application. Moreover, even if these companies are able provide proof of their 10% initial fund from the total proposed budget in fulfillment of funding requirements¹⁸⁶, breaking this systemic cycle of exclusion based on a risk assessment would require that theatre makers also obtain sufficient work experience needed to qualify them for funding consideration, hence, the catch-22 scenario which continues to confound them.

To meet institutional funding requirements, theatre newcomers would need to comply to charting their production(s) strategically in the early years of entrance

¹⁸⁵ whether familial, friendship, collegial, communal, or institutional ties

¹⁸⁶ for the committee to judge as their monetary commitment to the project

into the industry such that it could be simultaneously documented as evidence in support of their funding application later on, as they gradually save towards the capital needed to finance their productions. This is where crowdfunding presents non-qualifiers with the option to initiate a resource point from where further financial support may germinate. The striking difference in theatre makers' dependency on crowdfunding (and by extension, their wealth or dearth of social capital) which is largely shaped by their stages of practice, brings attention to their respective positionality in ascertaining how crowdfunding is used to fit their project aims and purposes, with cumulative repercussions on the larger landscape of theatre production.

9.1.1 The Symbolic Capital of Theatre Companies

The research gathered that theatre companies at their different levels of practice ultimately aim to be institutionally funded. This is perceived as reaching the pinnacle of artistic validation and standard of artistic excellence that place them at par with others recognized in the industry, besides the opportunity to work with sufficient financial support. Thus, to be publicly funded is seen as an endorsement of quality, acknowledgment of the capacity to be trusted with public money, as approved by a national body to execute policy aims. I reason that this represents the highest form of symbolic capital desired by theatre new entrants whose missing ingredient is a good reputation, an asset that could tremendously accelerate their way to a future of public funding. Here, the knowledge and familiarity of how public funding applications work can guide theatre companies in strategizing their productions in such a way that they are able to address both aspects of artistic excellence and the social-cultural praxis that meet public funding requirements. In the effort towards institutional recognition, theatre makers substitute for their lack of symbolic capital as newcomers with endeavours that

would quickly gear them towards the qualification for public funding. This realization can be seen in the strategic aim of new companies to raise their symbolic capital as soon as possible through the scheduling of tours, participating in fringe festivals, competing for cultural awards, receiving favourable media attention, and obtaining critical reviews, as the cases have illustrated.

The inquiry into the research question has highlighted that theatre makers' stock of positive social capital is key to mobilizing resources at the early stage of their cultural venture when not only the scarcity of economic capital presents new theatre makers with a lower starting point, but more importantly, the lack of symbolic (recognition and reputation) that cultural work depends. By bringing the realm of social relations into cultural giving, the crowdfunding of theatre projects has appealed to the involvement of individuals across theatre makers' levels of social capital that overlaps with the position of the arts as public good. Hence, while donating to someone they know would assist in theatre project materialization, there is an overarching motivation to alleviate theatre and its experience from a deficit caused by reduced public funding in the sector.

In sum, responses from backers towards the fund solicitations by theatre companies have exposed the levels of social capital typifying their different stages in the industry. Bonding social capital has shown to be a striking feature among new graduate theatre companies, bridging social capital is demonstrably higher among late-entrant individual artists whereas linking social capital is noticeably more evident among established theatre companies. Additionally, a theatre company's ability to mobilize resources repeatedly, or to extend 'the ask' and opportunities further from this initial momentum of support, requires the ability to deploy support from a combination of access to financial capital according to

resources its respective position can command. In fact, theatre companies that are able to mobilize more resources from crowdfunding have often succeeded in making one layer of social capital permeate another¹⁸⁷ with the linking of network connections¹⁸⁸. Often, this has been achieved through social media optimization connecting crowdfunding campaign pages, company websites, and new media communications in drawing support from the more serious contributors (such as professional artists¹⁸⁹, fellow practitioners¹⁹⁰), socially distant backers or their ‘weak ties’ (such as a less known family friend¹⁹¹, a university junior¹⁹²), including unknown backers or their brokerage (such as a crowdfunding platform follower/subscriber¹⁹³, a person touched by personal plight¹⁹⁴). Since the concern of their weak ties tend to reside with the projects themselves, the decision to donate provides validation of their socio-artistic worth, and/or contribution to specific branches of artistic knowledge, thereby, simultaneously lending them artistic legitimacy. Addressing the research question of “*What effect does crowdfunding have on the UK theatre funding ecosystem? What repercussions does it have on the wider theatre landscape?*”, therefore, demands that the relational giving¹⁹⁵ in the crowdfunding of theatre projects be considered in relation to arts patronage since backers’ motivation to assist theatre makers is seen parallel to their capacity to contribute and enrich the cultural landscape. To engage with the emerging issues that the research questions entail, however, requires revisiting the actors involved in the exchange of capitals. Hence, I will proceed by reiterating the three categories of theatre makers whose inherent social capital

¹⁸⁷ for example, using support from their community social capital to gain institutional social capital

¹⁸⁸ such as community engagements, alliances, partnerships, and institutional associations

¹⁸⁹ as seen in most cases of individual artists but especially with established theatre companies

¹⁹⁰ as seen in the cases of *JG* and *MA*

¹⁹¹ as seen in the cases of *JG*, *SH*, and *WOWZER*

¹⁹² as experienced by *SH*

¹⁹³ as experienced by *Jules*, and *WOWZER*

¹⁹⁴ as experienced by *Jules*

¹⁹⁵ Scharf and Smith (2016) describes relational giving as donations gathered through people’s relationship with one another, and specifically as individuals raising funds from their network of families and friends. Meanwhile, Taylo (2019) points to the sense that people are connected.

constitute 'the crowd', and how the willingness to donate to crowdfunding campaigns translates into their symbolic vote of theatrical productions.

9.1.2 Bonding Social Capital, Affective Economy, and Artistic Freedom

The data reveals that the network of close social relations of bonding social capital is widespread among graduate theatre companies. With little to no connection to larger arts organizations, reputable theatre companies, or professional networks, and minimal knowledge on accessible institutional funding, most theatre graduate theatre companies have had to count on the support of their horizontal social network spread across family members¹⁹⁶, kin-like relations, and friendship networks. Like its namesake, bonding social capital is a resource that when accessed, speaks of the relationship that is brought closer because of the decision of one party to give, and the appreciation that comes from accepting this help by another, resulting in the strengthening of bonds between them. As gathered from the interviews, financial assistance from social relations in times of need reinforces their closeness with the soliciting theatre makers, a support that occurs generally out of a sense of compassion. More specifically, family members and kin-like social relations have donated out of obligation, admiration, and as a form of encouragement, while it is also not uncommon for their financial support to leave theatre makers with a recollection of fondness, gratitude and as a signal of approval in their career path. Meanwhile, bonding social capital among older theatre companies tend to come from old friends known from their years at the university and school, who now hold jobs that can afford them to donate, including colleagues or co-workers both within and outside the artistic circle. Through a shared membership, friends within the artistic circle have mainly donated to assert

¹⁹⁶ usually parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and occasionally siblings

their solidarity by identifying with the financial plight as a close struggle of their own (Pillai and Krishnakumar, 2019). This outlines the distinction between the mechanical solidarity in the bonding social capital among graduate theatre companies with the more organic solidarity in support for established theatre companies which comes from the cohesion embedded in biological and collegial relations, respectively.

As individuals closest to them, the support of family members and friends are the first threshold of trust and layers of dependency usually needed for young enterprises to advance with confidence into the real world, before they are in the position where support can come from extensive layers of social capital. As a start, these donations are important markers of moral support and confidence from their loved ones that function as motivators to forge ahead with their career choice. The emotive response in small donations from families and friends have even outshadows its monetary function as their decision to give affirms the belief in their creative effort, thus, reflecting the affective capital they possess. As affective economy, these micro-donations grant soliciting theatre makers the emotional support that strengthens their choice of artistic ideation and direction, simultaneously helping to validate the product of their new venture.

As new theatre makers, total artistic freedom is key to finding their forte, and at a stage where many of them are still defining themselves as theatre makers in their own right, the value of this freedom in experimenting and crossing artistic boundaries is especially constructive to the development of their artistic identity. Furthermore, aside from being an enabler for new theatrical ventures, bonding social capital in crowdfunding is core to the building of trust in new talents and human capital of young theatre makers. Typically gifted in goodwill, these

donations are often altruistic tokens to help young artists start their career and make an entry in the industry, as apparently in their well wishes for the companies (see **TABLE 8**). Evidently, donations accessed from these relations are seed monies without the exchange of equity or profit shares, but as support for their chosen career path.

TABLE 8: Sample of comments from backers on theatre companies' campaign pages

CATEGORY	COMPANY	BACKERS' COMMENTS
Graduate Theatre Companies	<i>BLOOM!</i>	<p>MM 24th March 2018 Sounds a brilliant idea! Go for it!! it's not much but I hope this little bit helps</p> <p>SF 15th March 2018 Woo hoo go get em boys! ♥◻♥◻♥◻ Miss & love all 3 of ya!</p> <p>KH 24th April 2018 Looks like a cracker of a show, J-dawg! Have a blast on tour!</p>
	<i>DUPLICATE</i>	<p>ML 21st February 2018 Good luck! Hope you raise enough to continue your dreams</p> <p>JB 23rd March 2019 Supporting you in all your ventures!</p> <p>ALM 8th March 2019 We support you all the way!! Wishing you all the success and best reviews for Fringe Take 2 xx</p>
	<i>INTREPID</i>	<p>CA 17th April 2019 Keep doing the damn thing ladies! Wish I could go see it this year ♥◻</p> <p>JF 19th April 2019 All the best to your run at the fringe !! If I can help in anyway do let me know ! And here's a challenge... let's try and get a subtle musical theatre classic in the jingle !! All the best can't wait to see both shows !!</p> <p>AP 19th April 2019 Wishing you every success this year at The Fringe. I loved the show last year and so looking forward to seeing your new work. Your talent is beautiful and delighted to be a wee part of your journey. Lots of love Ann xxx</p>
Individual Artists	<i>BELLE</i>	<p>TT 25th October 2015 Love your idea and really hope you get the rest of the money. We need more women telling the stories :) xxx</p> <p>PC 30th September 2015 This will be great Sara. Looking forward to seeing you out and about!</p> <p>FW 26th October 2015 All the best to a natural born storyteller and my oldest friend.</p>

	<i>TABATHA</i>	<p>BG_18th April 2019 Supporting a compassionate, powerful, creative woman in sharing her work with others is the least I can do... Your skills astound me. Best of luck and all the love xxx</p> <p>IM_20th March 2019 I'm supporting the team because I appreciate the talent, energy and commitment that's going into making the show and bringing it to audiences.</p> <p>BBD Co._18th April 2019 [The project] is a hugely important project for older children to explore body positivity, embrace otherness and celebrate diversity. It needs to be made. x</p>
Established Theatre Companies	<i>GC</i>	<p>TO_27th October 2015 Wish we could be there to see it - I know it will be a hilarious hit! Much love xx</p> <p>TG_12th November 2015 Fabulous you inspiring Woman xx</p> <p>RW_17th December 2015 Good Luck with your project. I'm sorry this isn't more and I'm sorry it took me so long to do it! XX</p>
	<i>MA</i>	<p>SF_11th December 2016 This is a great and important art work, and I wish this project every success. Xx</p> <p>KA_5th December 2016 Really hope you make your money. Good luck!</p>
	<i>SH</i>	<p>WG_12th December 2017 We always Love the work of Highly Sprung. They make such a difference to so many children's lives. Keep up the good work! XX</p> <p>LC_6th December 2017 Love the work that this company so passionately delivers to our young people. Wishing you all the best! Xx</p> <p>A&GR_24th November 2017 You guys are all doing a terrific job! It's wonderful to see your amazing results - so inspiring. XX</p>

Nevertheless, despite being a great push for the production of new work and the nurturing of artistic freedom (culminating in the encouragement of art for art's sake approach to theatre making), the financial-cum-emotional support to new graduate theatre makers may blindside them from the significance of instrumental art in bridging community and institutional social capital. While the focus on the avant-garde offers valuable contribution to new artistic knowledge, the concentration on intrinsic art has a tendency to restrict their reach of expanding beyond their most

accessible network of support. It is apparent that the utility aspect of the project also needs to be met if theatre makers are keen to develop and extend support to their bridging and linking social capital. Producing work for “the fun of it”¹⁹⁷, or because of “what we felt was ignored”¹⁹⁸, or because “we’ve always been interested in X”¹⁹⁹ as shared in the interview responses, proved that support for theatre productions based on familial and friendship networks could easily limit their funding appeal from community and institutional social capital due to the lack of engagement in societal causes and forms of activism. Nevertheless, with the accumulation of cultural awards and higher support from their vertical network, new theatre companies have quickly gained symbolic capital for their avant-garde productions, opening access to institutional social capital. For the majority, the price of affective economy, as originating mostly from close personal networks, creates insularity in the kind of work that is produced despite their originality and experimental qualities. Hence, while the affective economy of bonding social capital seems to provide ‘no-strings attached’ support which frees graduate theatre companies to embrace their artistic voice without the need for any policy compliance, its closed network can give a false sense of security. With the safe haven of families and friends as their capital providers, theatre makers may overlook their narrow scope of support, or having to withstand critical assessment of quality until they are themselves validated by the larger population of audience members, cultural experts from the artistic community, aesthetes at fringe festivals, and funding decision-makers at the institutional level. Whereas the emotional connection has drawn them closer, it is simultaneously capable of keeping other levels of social capital at bay, by unintentionally forming family and friendship

¹⁹⁷ as seen the case of *BLOOM!*

¹⁹⁸ as seen in the case of *BESPOKE*

¹⁹⁹ as seen in the case of *DAPPER*, *WOOZER*

networks insularity (Portes, 2014). At the heart of affective economy, emotions²⁰⁰ form attachments which unknowingly draw recipients away from potentially larger or longer lasting resources rather than the overreliance and dependency from known individuals (Portes, 2014; Gofman, 2014) Hence, although the support from bonding social capital is emotionally vital to new ventures, unless the cohesiveness formed through solidarity is utilized to explore newer and broader relations, the capacity for these companies to gather further support can increasingly feel restrictive and inward looking. This is particularly relevant to production sustainability as seen in the case of *BLOOM!*, whose immediate and vigorous effort to expand its network from early on has allowed it to consequently secure paid engagements without relapsing into a second crowdfunding, or at least without relying again largely on families and friends. Where the family and friends network has continued to support subsequent projects, this has been the case with different projects and newer developments with institutional monetary and non-monetary support exhibiting the progress in a company's milestones like *DUPLICATE's*.

Observation into the crowdfunding of theatre projects by graduate theatre companies reveals that the reality of the lack of social capital, and the companies' inability to expand their reach to its outer layers of social capital after their first crowdfunding campaign could quickly progress to the untimely demise of young ensembles. The window of production for young ensembles is identified to be typically the first few years before their dedication to group efforts begins to dissipate without access to bridging and linking social capital, which comes from the support of community and institutional networks. Only three out of ten samples of graduate theatre companies in this research have managed to seek repeat

²⁰⁰ such as empathy and compassion

donations by relying again mostly on their bonding social capital while the rest stopped at only one crowdfunding campaign, which confirms a shortlived dependency on their bonding social capital, as a result of donor fatigue²⁰¹. To illustrate, after two fringe festivals, two tours, and several performance invitations in between, members of *TALEBEARERS* have moved on to pursue solo para-artistic careers, short of three years of its existence as an ensemble with part-time jobs and without further support at the community and institutional levels. Similarly, *BESPOKE* has opted to pause after stretching two new productions following the crowdfunding of their first project, which were both overwhelmingly produced in the light of art for art's sake. Comparatively, *BESPOKE*'s first project²⁰², which was crowdfunded, attracted the interest of the local tourism and national heritage authorities because of its take on site-specific historical venues which gave *BESPOKE* some local attention, but support to the company did not resume for its next two productions which were not designed with instrumental attachments. Following the short-lived success initiated by the positive response from their bonding social capital, *BESPOKE*, *TALEBEARERS* and *WOWZER* have eventually gone into hiatus. This denotes the fragility of new companies when the broadening of their social capital did not take place, making it difficult to support beyond the networks of their close social relations. Such constraint, it seems, is compounded by the lack of utility in their productions as all three companies have focused on intrinsic art. Since graduate theatre companies are not expecting to operate sustainably through their productions in the early years of their existence, continuous production losses, or the inability to break even has easily led to a brief productive lifespan²⁰³. Companies with high net worth donors in their bonding

²⁰¹ Only *DAPPER*, *DUPLICATE*, and *INTREPID* have crowdfunded more than once.

²⁰² containing a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic aspects

²⁰³ All the 10 new graduate theatre companies interviewed expected that they would be personally funding their venture until a much later time, with financial sustainability being unforeseeable, and more likely a case of exception rather than the norm.

social capital may last longer but until they acquire support from communities and institutions, they too risk slipping into 'the valley of death'²⁰⁴.

The development of graduate theatre companies has been shown to be the result of persistently active effort to extend their network. In managing their bonding and bridging social capital, *DUPLICATE* and *BLOOM*, have been able to sustain their production for a lengthier duration, performing expansively regionally and abroad, as they went on to win cultural awards along the way. *DUPLICATE*'s immediate engagement with local libraries, conferences and a mentoring scheme, has landed it alliances with professional veterans, and international partners in less than three years of existence, with repeated participation in fringe festivals, during which it has also managed to research and develop, and crowdfund for its second project, with backing from its newly developed bridging and linking social capitals. Similarly, *BLOOM*'s multi-pronged effort to instigate connections outside families and friends before, during, and after its crowdfunding campaign by performing at bars, time-shared gigs, and clowning circuits, had secured it multiple fringe participations where it went on to win international cultural awards. Using its bonding social capital to scaffold onto vertical networks of bridging and linking social capital has served the company well into its third year when it continues to be sustained from the ripple effect of its first production. However, the same cannot be said about the graduate theatre companies, which, despite sufficient financial assistance in the beginning, risked a premature departure from the theatre scene caused by their inability to reach across a more horizontal (grassroots) and vertical (institutional) network structure²⁰⁵. Hence, without long-

²⁰⁴ 'Valley of death' refers to the stage in the life of an enterprise which has operated but yet to generate revenue (Barr, Baker and Markham; 2017). In this context, I relate to the fact that theatre companies have been producing but have yet to obtain any financial support that would enable them to survive, thereby increasing their chances of withdrawal from the theatre scene.

²⁰⁵ In the case of *TALEBEARERS*, *BESPOKE*, and *WOWZER*

term considerations for financial support, new graduate theatre companies face a threat to survival as collective detachment increases when individual members started pursuing other professional interests and committing to regularly paid employment as they gradually reach the ends of their personal limits in financing productions without external sources of funding²⁰⁶.

9.1.3. Bridging- Linking Social Capital, Alliances, and Sustainability

Permeating the mixed horizontal-vertical network structure in bridging social capital brings theatre companies a step closer to the vertical network structure of linking social capital where institutional support usually resides. As gathered from the data, bridging social capital is the connector mediating local support for theatre companies with institutional support, and along with it the trust that evolves from the ground up. Bridging social capital presents a fertile ground not only for forming local networks and alliances, but also simultaneously functioning as audience development, both of which increase the chance of accessing external resources from relevant institutions. The research shows that bridging social capital is the staple of late-entry individual artists, whose local knowledge, familiarity, and sense of belonging provide them with ways to navigate and utilize their societal role in the social capital loci of their locality²⁰⁷. As active members of the community both offline and online, individual artists are known figures in their respective fields before they venture into a solo theatrical career path, where direct or particularized trust has incubated for some time among community members²⁰⁸ and specialized networks²⁰⁹. These existing connections at both horizontal and vertical network structures, even at a small scale initially, have given individual artists an advantage

²⁰⁶ As in the case of *BESPOKE* and *TALEBEARERS*, currently on alert for drawing donations mostly from the insularity of families and friends networks are *INTREPID*, *LOOPED*, and *SPOOFED*.

²⁰⁷ For example, schools, libraries, museums, farms, churches, and beaches, as seen in the cases of *Jules*, *Tabatha* and *Belle*.

²⁰⁸ such as parents, neighbours, library members, school staff

²⁰⁹ such as carers' forum, educators' network, and charities

when they decided to crowdfund even with minimal or absence of donations from families and friends.

The research shows that individual artists who have been quick and strategic in developing their bridging social capital alongside relevant linking social capital beforehand were able to command financial support for their crowdfunding project in subsequent years, with new as well as repeat backers. In fact, they have been able to attract support from micro-philanthropists with successive and relatively substantial donations to all crowdfunded projects, as well as donations from new followers that have not existed prior to the initial campaign²¹⁰. Both types of backers have been following the campaigns due to a special interest in the aims advocated by the sole traders, without expectations of return for themselves. Rather, their giving is an expression of shared belief, and incentive for socio-artistic contributions, exemplified their interest-based solidarity.

As ideations born out of community engagements, and because of the support from the community majority, individual artists have displayed a tendency for openness and the propensity to welcome co-creation into their projects more than graduate theatre companies whose bridging social capital is almost negligible, and less so by established theatre companies which greater portion of external resources come from institutional funders. The individual artists interviewed perceived co-creation as a productive aspect of their work, and consider public participation in suggesting, responding, engaging especially in post-show dialogues as important aspects of their production, something which graduate theatre companies have not given much thought²¹¹, contrastingly an aspect of production established theatre companies tend to be more possessive about as

²¹⁰ in the case of *Belle*, *Jules*, and *Tabatha*.

²¹¹ due to their limited encounter and engagement with the community

exclusively the prerogative of experienced artists. This raises the question of whether relying on the wider horizontal support of the community has a role to play in facilitating a more co-operative, two-way communication between theatre makers and their target audience, rather than their artistry as individual artists embedded in the social and educational aspect of their work. The aim to practice a sustainable venture among individual artists shapes the underlying response to balance supply (of theatre productions) with demand (based on audience's needs). Driven by individual artists' own orientation towards co-creation, the combination of these factors arguably facilitates largely needs-driven productions that appeal to their communities, and which institutions are usually keen to support.

As part of the bridging social capital that has materialized, individual artists have come into contact with more like-minded professionals who have been working towards similar aims, or within related capacity, which provides them assurance of network support and solidarity in their cause through emerging partnerships. Such membership has its advantage in allowing individual artists to grow as partners with larger theatre companies²¹², in which they can benefit from the merging of their social capital, including their audience members and followers, hence, promoting financial sustainability and symbolic capital. Nevertheless, while this provided a sense of belonging to an umbrella body of practitioners involved in a specific theatrical practice through strengthened camaraderie in their shared artistic identity, there is also a danger in the comfort of working within a gradually homophilous alliance rather than initiating heterogeneous alliances outside it. Without the active pursuit of crossing over and forming new alliances, individual artists also risk becoming insular when working within the limits of binding network

²¹² and by association, the multiple networks of their collaborative partnerships with private and non-governmental entities

membership²¹³. This should not be seen as only part of what individual artists do alongside solo ventures of their own, but also as means to retain their artistic individuality which had earlier informed their niche rather than allowing their work to increasingly become more alike with others within the same network.

Jules and *Belle*, for instance, managed to demonstrate this dual modality by overseeing network partnerships with parent organizations that support their line of work, while continuing to pursue the mastery and cross-disciplinary fields, which had earlier defined their artistic calling. Alongside the regional fringe festival participation and a new membership with a performance advocacy group, *Jules* has gone on to accept a new role as residential curator for special needs visitors whose daily struggles have earlier inspired her theatrical venture. Meanwhile, aside from her regional tours, *Belle* juggles between her gigs with a troupe of promenade performers and international conferences for inter-cultural/transcultural knowledge sharing and exchange. This points to the usefulness of forming alliances in lending a collective artistic support when venturing into niche markets, especially for late entrants to the theatre industry. Such membership among professional networks not only has the capacity for greater associative trust from the identification with larger, credible bodies, but whose recognitional legitimacy can also rub off on newly developed productions of solo enterprises. Thus, where sustainability is a necessary consideration in their venture, individual artists need to benefit from scholarly alliances with national agencies and higher institutions through collaborative research and development as seen in the cases of *Jules*, *Belle*'s, and *DUPLICATE*'s in their advocacy across schools, communities, and parental networks towards the novel methodologies and performative techniques they prescribe. All three became first-time recipients of ACE and other institutional

²¹³ particularly when their methodology or specialization falls under the same category such as clowning, puppetry, and special needs

funding in less than two years of founding networks, as with Belle's association with international scholars towards the study of methodologies and performative techniques they prescribe. While *Belle* has obtained ACE funding by the end of her crowdfunding campaign, *Jules* finally obtained hers after her second crowdfunding campaign apart from previous institutional funding received.

In sum, for linking social capital to form, developing the bridging social capital is crucial as an agential role connecting theatre makers, their horizontal network of support as well as their possible vertical network of support. The experience of most graduate theatre companies shows that bridging social capital (particularly community social capital) is the largely missing ingredient in their level of support, which puts them at risk of premature hiatus and early disbanding as ensembles. It has been shown to be the strongest indicator behind the success of individual artists to acquire institutional funding, in due support of their venture, despite a delayed entry to the industry.

9.1.4 Bridging-Linking Social Capital, Symbolic Capital, and Longevity

Among the three categories of theatre makers, the ability to draw financial support from their bridging and linking social capital resides mostly with established theatre makers. This is largely due to the credibility from their proven track record that has earned them specific trust²¹⁴ from trustees of funding awards, institutional affiliations, partnership with public sectors²¹⁵, and local agenda committee²¹⁶. This dimension of specific trust adds to the generalized trust gathered from the companies' repertoire of productions over the years, accomplishment of their past, promise of their oncoming tours, media interviews, and workshops, which

²¹⁴ Backers who had donated to established theatre companies make references to the latter's contribution, local presence, and status.

²¹⁵ Such as schools and the National Health Service

²¹⁶ Such as City of Culture

information is usually available for potential backers to browse on the company website²¹⁷, and is especially useful for individuals who do not know them directly to support their project.

The composition of their backers from the outer concentric layers of network circles consisting of local members of the community, former clients and participants, fellow practitioners in similar professional domains, partners in the industry, members from local and regional alliances, followers and mysterious backers, have altogether reflect these companies' symbolic capital²¹⁸. With these overlapping layers of social capital, backers from the bridging social capital network may not entirely be strangers to the companies²¹⁹, and have at times brokered the relationship to vertical networks from the consideration of audiences' and participants' feedbacks. Hence, backers have donated based on the positive impression these companies have left. Interestingly, most of these backers have donated based on their second-hand experience of the companies rather than direct encounters of their own, which points to the weight of their beneficiaries' feedback as brokers reinforcing their decision to give as part of the generalized trust towards artists themselves.

Pledges have also been guided by the high regards for the efforts shown by these theatre companies. Sometimes backers even know these companies by name, and could recall their performance in public events or past contributions to the city or borough such that their bridging and linking social capital network would have their back when they needed to raise extra funds, as a decision largely influenced by their role in inspiring others. Assisting them financially, therefore, feels clearly

²¹⁷ as they are linked to the crowdfunding campaign page

²¹⁸ such as reputation and prestige

²¹⁹ such as the parent of a workshop participant, a grandparent of a trained scholar, local neighbourhood or community members

justified because of the need for others to continue benefitting from their artistic excellence, and the social outcomes they have been helping to deliver. Backers were also aware, and have taken note of the profile of these companies as recipients or former recipients of institutional funding, which standing contributes to their symbolic capital as companies that excel, and similarly, as assets to the communities they have served. Hence, it presented backers with a heightened sense of generosity, even pride, to be able to help where they could, knowing that their donations would no doubt allow reputable theatre companies to continue doing what they have done so well, and ensuring that their target audience would continue to be guaranteed a meaningful cultural experience. Thus, despite the relational distance ('weak ties') of these individuals in the companies' network, backers recognize the value of the projects, and readily support the companies they feel deserving of their financial assistance, which is usually signalled by their prior or partial ACE funding.

As much as half of the backers for established theatre companies belong in their vertical network with higher donation brackets (see **TABLE 9**), among whom are individuals holding influential positions in specialized or related fields in the industry. As illustrated in these cases, donations from reputable theatre companies are also capable of attracting associative capital, or social relations gained through association by aligning the success of one organization with another²²⁰. The symbolic capital of reputation and prestige can make it an honour for some backers in their decision to donate (such as a former intern²²¹, a former workshop participant²²², a journalist²²³), especially those whose current positions have been

²²⁰ such as an eminent producer of an NPO donating to an ACE funded local theatre company²²⁰, a history scholar donating to a local community historical theatre project²²⁰

²²¹ in the case of *SH*

²²² in the cases of *MA*, *SH*.

²²³ In the case of *MA*

attributive to the journey shared with these companies. Rather than the phenomenon of crowding out, the history of institutional funding of established theatre makers further crowds-in support for their campaigns since the symbolic capital they exhibit behaves as evidence of their merit which backers identify and feel drawn to. Moreover, not donating would suggest depriving communities of cultural treasures²²⁴, and risking the loss of value that companies of such reputational magnitude often bring. The key to obtain the support from bridging and linking social capital, therefore, lies in the existing reputation and recognized cultural branding articulated from a record of past artistic excellence. Therefore, by balancing artistic aims with social agendas, support for projects by established theatre companies have come from donors who can identify their worth, and from creative and local partners who can vouch for their notable aspirations and professional competence. Together with the interplay of reputational capital, this contributes to their longevity in the industry.

²²⁴ Backers of *GC*, *LH*, *MK*, *SA* and *SH* have expressed their concern over the potential absence of cultural experience in the community when speaking of their donation to theatre companies whose work they have been acquainted.

TABLE 9: Backers' donations to *LH's* theatre project

pledged £15	pledged £20
12th April 2016 at 9:49am	7th March 2016 at 7:56pm
Chester cake sale pledged £107	pledged £20
11th April 2016 at 4:38pm	6th March 2016 at 1:33pm
Prof pledged £250	pledged £20
9th April 2016 at 2:19pm	6th March 2016 at 10:55am
pledged £10	pledged £5
8th April 2016 at 11:40am	3rd March 2016 at 8:55am
cake sale and raffle pledged £96	pledged £5
4th April 2016 at 5:17pm	2nd March 2016 at 11:57pm
pledged £125	pledged £10
4th April 2016 at 1:24pm	2nd March 2016 at 4:09pm
pledged £20	pledged £5
3rd April 2016 at 7:27pm	1st March 2016 at 9:44am
pledged £5	pledged £20
31st March 2016 at 12:01pm	29th February 2016 at 5:38pm
has also backed 2 other projects	pledged £10
Audience at Sheffield health	29th February 2016 at 4:46pm
& social care NHS pledged £105	pledged £50
30th March 2016 at 9:24pm	21st February 2016 at 6:29pm
pledged £20	pledged £40
30th March 2016 at 7:15pm	20th February 2016 at 6:02pm
pledged £20	pledged £10
29th March 2016 at 7:10	18th February 2016 at 4:47pm
pledged £100	pledged £5
27th March 2016 at 10:32pm	17th February 2016 at 7:49pm
pledged £5	has also backed 1 other project
24th March 2016 at 1:10pm	pledged £10
pledged £5	17th February 2016 at 5:23pm
23rd March 2016 at 8:36pm	Anonymous pledged £50
Audience members pledged £183	17th February 2016 at 1:01pm
22nd March 2016 at 12:38pm	pledged £50
pledged £20	17th February 2016 at 11:58am
20th March 2016 at 7:36pm	Anonymous pledged £20
Anonymous pledged £5	17th February 2016 at 11:41am
18th March 2016 at 1:17pm	
pledged £10	
17th March 2016 at 9:56am	
pledged £10	
16th March 2016 at 7:22pm	
pledged £10	
13th March 2016 at 6:42pm	
pledged £50	
10th March 2016 at 11:25am	
pledged £20	
8th March 2016 at 11:44am	

9.2 Theatre Makers and the Centrality of Reputation

A pertinent revelation of this research is how the decision to raise funds through crowdfunding platforms from pre, during, and post-campaign stages of fundraising, inextricably links social capital with other forms of capitals, and ultimately points to the prominence of an auxiliary symbolic capital: reputation. Depending on their respective positionality, the decision for theatre makers to use crowdfunding has brought into focus the desirability of their social capital as relational assets that allow for reputation-building (among new graduate theatre companies), expansion (among individual artists), and enhancement (among established theatre companies).

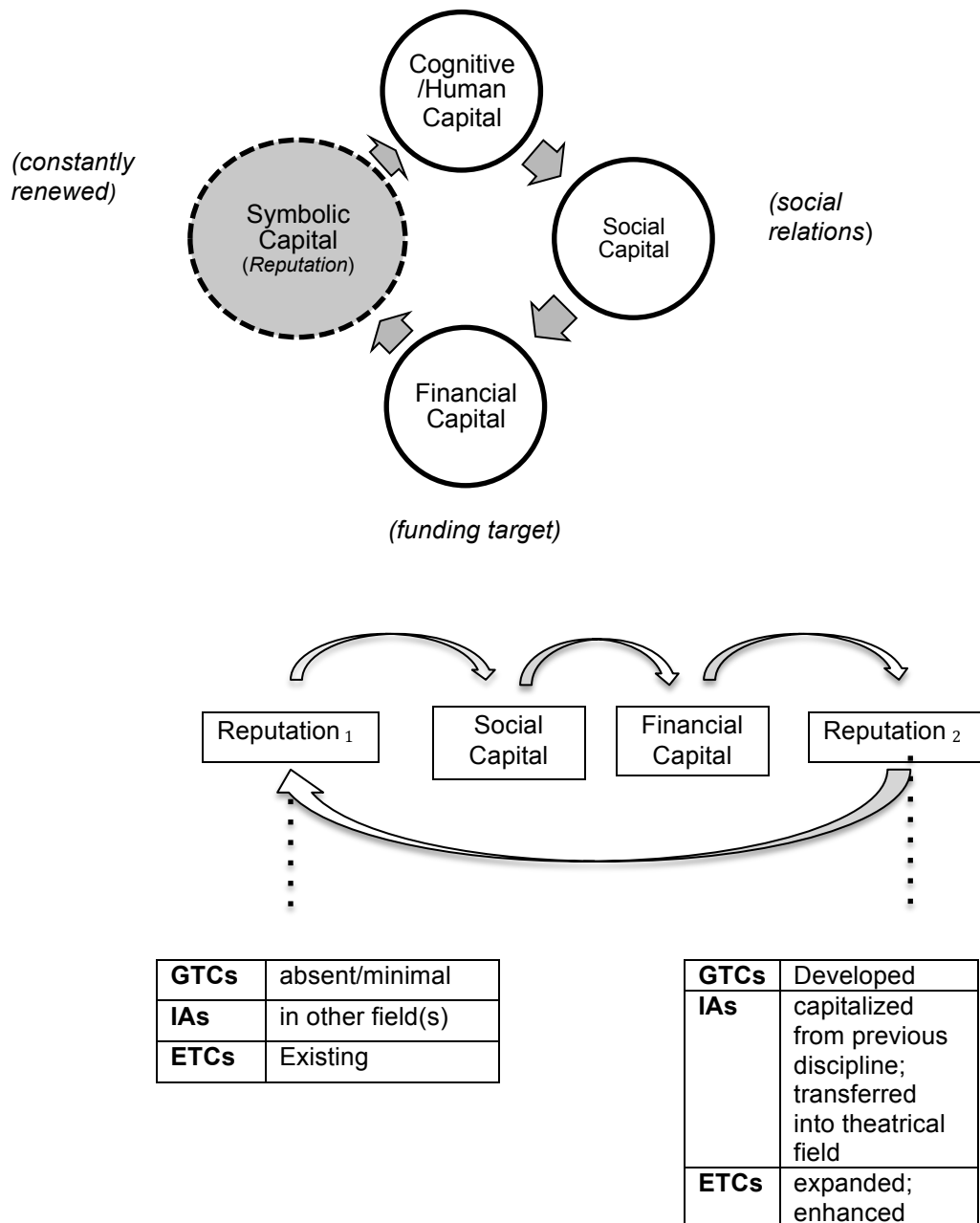
The research shows that each category of theatre companies has resorted to crowdfunding due to the scarcity of financial capital but by reaching out to their social capital²²⁵, they have gathered more than their financial support. With the interconnectivity of social media to the crowdfunding platform, the digital realm provides fertile grounds for the dissemination of project updates and the rising of company profile, while connecting relatively known networks to fresh network territories of previously unconnected 'structural holes' (Burt, 2011). These structural holes are particularly evident from the small number of unknown backers in the majority of campaigns; and in the case of a few theatre companies, the presence of individuals who continue to repeatedly back projects for the close and personal connection they have with the subject matter and/or the causes theatre companies are striving for, despite not being part of their pre-existing networks.

Among the more established theatre companies, both the extension of reach to previously unconnected individuals, and the re-connection of older, distant social

²²⁵ their network of social relations

relations have allowed for the gaps in the network structures to be filled, allowing for reputation reaffirmation and expansion, which simultaneously translate into backers' recognition and endorsement of project's worth, therefore, lending legitimacy to their fundraising efforts, even with subsequent campaigns. The response to project campaigns and their following implementation as well as accomplishments, creates a motion in the cycle of capitals that constantly revises a company's current reputation. Conversely, newer theatre companies, which lack this prior reputation, are only in the process of developing a favourable company image, which improves with each campaign success, project implementation, and accomplishments. This is where winning cultural awards would significantly improve a theatre company's reputation, and upon this renewal, breaks its earlier reputational threshold as a new entrant to become a company with growing and enhanced reputation from its initial presence in the industry. Hence, the process of crowdfunding while targeting at financial capital sourced from social capital is simultaneously, a negotiation to attain and secure symbolic capital. As a symbolic capital, reputation renewal owes a great deal to reputation management through strategic social media communications embedded in the crowdfunding platform. Together with offline achievements, online communications help nurture the transient soft asset as changes in other forms of capital feed back into the cycle of capital convertibility as illustrated in **DIAGRAM 13**.

DIAGRAM 13: Cycle of Capital convertibility as see in the cases of Graduate Theatre Companies (GTCs), Individual Artists (IAs) and Established Theatre Companies (ETCs)



Comparatively, the anxiety over potentially poor donation response to crowdfunding campaigns, troubles established theatre companies more than newer theatre companies partly because of their long-term concern as companies with existing reputational capital. Because established theatre companies have been around longer²²⁶, they are more aware of how their reputation can be sustained, yet how it can also be fleeting and diminish with the wrong move (Horn, et.al., 2015). Consequently, their decision to crowdfund would usually include strategies to guarantee that their target would be met (Jackson, 2004:3). While meeting funding targets allow companies to leave a digital legacy of successful fundraising that improves their image, the digital footprint of a failed campaign could invite unwanted repercussions (Hesse and Teubner, 2019; Fertik and Thompson, 2015). Furthermore, as bigger entities with a name to their previous productions, most established theatre companies operate within a reputation network, deeming their dealing with crowdfunding riskier due to their existing partnerships with institutions, collaboration with multiple local and regional artistic and non-artistic bodies which alliances they value and wish to preserve, and continue to be held in such regards (Hesse and Teubner, 2019; Fertik and Thompson, 2015). Understandably, sustaining a shared reputation, places an added pressure upon established theatre companies to reach their funding targets, or at least, to finish with a reasonably successful campaign outcomes. Thus, the apprehension that established theatre companies have about their use of crowdfunding seems to be rooted in the fear of risking intangible assets they already possess through a potentially damaging aftermath despite the possibility that its use can also further enhance their reputation, and open doors to other opportunities (Horn et.al., 2015).

²²⁶ seven to forty years of experience in the industry, as gathered from the research data

Noticeably, in weighing their use of crowdfunding, established theatre companies are at a crossroad between the possible threat to their reputation as existing recipients of public funding in need of additional funding, and a test to grapple with a new mode of funding that might offer a novel prospect for organizational expansion (such as becoming charity incorporated²²⁷, acquiring long-term teaching roles at performing arts schools²²⁸, resuscitating historical archives with a highly international interest²²⁹). Moreover, having a pre-existing reputational capital gives established theatre makers the competitive advantage of loyalty retention, allowing them to transfer their offline, communitarian and institutional social capital into the online realm. With higher leverage and bargaining power inherited from their credibility in previous negotiation with authorities, established theatre companies tend to have an esteemed affect on plural backers. As shown from the interviews, established theatre companies have consequently been able to stand by their tried and tested formula of theatrical production, maintaining artistic leadership, and having full control of operations which are privileges that comes with their experience and status in the industry whilst still able to retain the loyalty of their supporters. In contrast, budding enterprises which are yet able to command a firm reputational currency have been more likely to function based on the openness and willingness to align their artistic objectives with (audience's) needs-driven approach as seen in some new graduate theatre makers, but particularly among late-entrant individual artists whose outlook on co-creation and collaboration are highly enmeshed with financial sustainability.

By comparison, with the absence of reputation (perhaps only minimal), graduate theatre companies' engagement with crowdfunding is simultaneously a project of

²²⁷ in the case of *SH*

²²⁸ in the case of *MA*

²²⁹ in the case of *MK*

reputation building. Their online self-branding and self-promotion are meant to overflow offline, and while they have been focussing on developing a community of followers, reputation has emerged as the by-product of their social media communications. Although the subject of reputation was never explicitly raised among new graduate theatre companies, it became clear from their social media communications that their crowdfunded productions articulate their artistic identity and branding, drawing attention to their participation and accomplishments at fringe festivals, all of which contribute to their emerging status in the industry. Most of the time, obtaining cultural nominations and awards, provides new graduate theatre companies with an endorsement of their work as appealing to popular taste²³⁰, and as indicators of quality theatrical experience²³¹ capable of shaping the future demand of production, thus, contributing to the building of reputation. Such pursuits in audience development and expert recognition are seen as integral investments for new theatre companies toward a viable future of institutional funding, a measurement described as “the economics of cultural awards” (English, 2014:120), where prized cultural categories function as devices of privilege conferred by “the expertise regime” (Karpik, 2010:168), as quality assurance of experiential products whose worth cannot be known before consumption (Nelson, 1970; Hey and Mc Kenna, 1981 qtd. in English, 2014:124). In addition, the symbolic capital gained from audience reception of the production is also inextricably linked to the cognitive capital stemming from the educational experience of graduate theatre makers from respectable institutions (which itself is a capital), as a build-in signal of quality, reinforcing each other in the process. All of this points to the increasing likelihood of “future pay offs”, a promise of improved financial and reputational capital (Agrawal and Catalini, 2014; Hui, et al., 2014). The cases have shown that winning performance categories or being shortlisted by

²³⁰ such as winning audience choice awards, receiving encouraging audience testimonies

²³¹ such as fulfilling judges' criteria, receiving commendable expert reviews

professional juries have opened doors for theatre companies to obtain valuable professional support²³², which acknowledgement signals their promising talent based on the economics of cultural awards (Hellman and Puri, 2002:15).

Meanwhile, individual artists consisting of late-entrants to the industry have an existing reputation capital which loyalty they are able to transfer from their previous standing especially among those who have known about their occupational background and expertise before turning into full-fledged performers. Although they have yet to operate within their reputational networks in the new field, their former work spheres²³³ have privileged them to operate based on positive referrals. Those with direct and indirect experienced of working with them on previous occasions as well as those who have been part of their professional networks recognize what these individual artists have to offer before they became full-time performers, and therefore, individual artists have come with a stock of social capital which could already vouch for their credibility by the time they embark on a new venture. Hence, while individual artists may lack the reputation capital in the theatre industry as solo performers, merits in their previous line of work possess the means to nudge their way into developing a new reputation in theatre making. Because of their 'former lives', late-entrant individual artists are in the position to draw on and obtain the support from broader levels of social capital than graduate theatre companies, due to their ability to quickly scaffold their reputation capital from their local knowledge, particularly knowledge of their audience and local communities, professional network alliances and interested parties in inter-related fields which they have been involved previously. Hence, by the time late-entrant individual artists made the decision to crowdfund, they were able to capitalize on their former credentials to make way for their new artistic

²³² in the form of mentorship, invitations to international conferences, and educational visits

²³³ such as arts organization administration, special needs therapy, and set design

identity. For that, their social media communications have turned offline supporters into online supporters, thereby, converting their former reputation (R_1) into economic capital (EC) with the crowdfunding of their projects. The success of the projects then renews their reputation (R_2), which feeds back into an evolving cycle of capital convertibility as illustrated earlier in **DIAGRAM 13**.

The discussion has so far accounted for the centrality of reputation across three ‘typical’ positionalities of theatre companies as an auxiliary symbolic capital that continuously renews with the changes in other capitals, and though reputation capital has escaped the narrative of crowdfunding projects by graduate theatre companies and individual artists, the inquiry into their backers and post-crowdfunding stage reveals its supreme importance for competitive advantage in the industry. Hence, whereas managing reputational risk stands as a consideration for established theatre companies concerned in safeguarding their legacy and preserving the economy of prestige they have since acquired, most new graduate theatre companies which started out without an existing reputation in the industry would find it taking shape with increased participation in theatrical events and their receipt of cultural awards.

9.3 Gifting/Giving to Theatre: Reciprocity, Civil Society, and Public Good

The reason theatre makers have managed to raise funds through crowdfunding from their web of social capital points to a pro-social behaviour that is still a large part of a cohesive British public. Giving to theatre owes to the response from a pre-existing civil society formed in the fabric of communities whose strength is drawn from their collectivity, and the disposition to empower communities (Sievers, 2010). Through shared concerns, individuals in their collective mobilize activism towards activities which importance may have escaped the radar of mainstream

considerations, or could not be catered for specifically. Thus, by responding to theatre makers' donation solicitations, backers have signed into a cooperative relationship through the norm of reciprocity whereby donations are given with the expectation for theatre makers to keep their side of the bargain as stated in their campaign page. In tipping the reciprocity balance scale, theatre makers' clarity in their intention and promise of execution conditions a push and pull factor through which an action invites a return, such that theatre makers' solicitations for funds drive the public to correspond by donating.

The two modes of crowdfunding of theatre projects invite a multitude of reciprocity variants. In a donation-based model, altruistic giving of backers is usually reciprocated with an expression of gratitude, and ultimately the project accomplishment as the intangible reward. With reciprocal altruism found to be common in the crowdfunding of theatre projects than the direct reciprocity of reward-based model, backers frequent refusal of rewards informs how they generally feel about cultural giving, in particular, for wanting as much as the amount raised to go towards the project rather than incurring the extra cost on theatre companies. Hence, more often than not, they would donate without claiming their rewards, or opt for a token of appreciation that has hardly any cost²³⁴, signalling a mutual understanding that the cost of declined rewards²³⁵ is better saved towards the projects:

"This is a working artist doing her best and even if it's not true...that she's not talented or whatever...I would still give to the project...but as it turns out...she is very talented [...] I went with my daughter [to the performance]...that was the incentive...I want my daughter to experience theatre...I wasn't interested in the [donation] rewards...I'm not bothered"

- DM, community musician

²³⁴ most common being social media shout outs

²³⁵ such as free tickets and signed posters

In this sense, a great deal of monetary contribution to the theatre projects eventually becomes donation-based due to backers' choice to opt out from receiving the rewards, although the reward-based model can be an appealing invitation to donate, which some theatre makers have managed to entice by offering personalized rewards²³⁶. Such charity has spurred from the understanding of the circumstances that have placed theatre makers in the position of asking for donations in the first place despite the intention to create a cultural experience for others, which can be traced back to a sense of concern and empathy. Furthermore, underlying the decision to donate is a basic awareness in the coming together of individuals to assist financially by taking up a shared responsibility in the production of public good. The sense of collectiveness that is linked by common interests to benefit not just theatre makers but also the target audience, communities, and the larger theatre industry, suggests a pre-existing civic duty among backers. Hence, it is evident that as public good, the arts relay a significant regard for the commons as seen in backers' decision to donate even when they could not directly benefit from such effort themselves, but more importantly that others could (Klamer 2002,2003, 2004; Throsby, 2001; Frey, 2002).

As an in-built mechanism of crowdfunding, the major appeal of reciprocity in the transaction between the financial capital that backers can provide, and the gift of creativity that theatre makers can offer in return, helps keep the dynamics of exchange in motion. As an agreement that is understood between the party that asks and the party that gives, knowing that cooperatively they can yield a greater outcome, the cycle of gifting would infinitely continue to benefit the greater community for as long as reciprocity is practiced.

²³⁶ such as a personalized jingle or a personalized 'thank you' video

As seen in the cases explored, the types of reciprocities involved have been responses to the pressure points inflicted at the macro level, mainly as a reaction against the government's under provision, or the failure to provide adequately for the arts (as with other non-profit endeavours):

"It's always the arts [visual and theatrical] in general, that's not getting the big chunk of the pie"

- *S, regular fringe attendee*

"The public funding is getting worse...I'm kind of happy to help where I can"

- *C, drama undergraduate*

"There isn't much money around...and how do you choose to give to health or the arts...but I'd love to see the arts being funded by the government [...] we all have a responsibility to support"

- *A, former theatre amateur*

Hence, a huge reason underlying the public's decision to step in and provide the financial support within its limited means is due to putative reciprocity, a response to equalize the funding imbalance in the presence of inequality of funding distribution where some projects receive institutional funding while others do not (Dacombe et. al., 2018:2; Deth and Maloney, 2012:157; Kolm, 2009:197). The inequality of what is felt as unfair or uneven funding distribution, summons a moral dimension of putative reciprocity with the imperative to remedy or rectify the situation, common in the regime of "welfare state" of which the UK is a liberal welfarist state (Dacombe et. al., 2018:2; Deth and Maloney, 2012:157; Kolm, 2009:197). This response is strongest among backers from the networks of artists who have made a point to uplift their members (exemplifying mechanical solidarity through group loyalty and responsibility) through a financial lifeline that allows theatre to survive under the strain of public funding:

“There’s a very supportive community atmosphere in my department...we all tried to help in the way we can...more like a gesture of support from artist to artist”

– C, *drama undergraduate*

In the artistic circle, financial support to fellow artists represents a reciprocal solidarity through which they help sustain the freedom to create, exercise their artistic expression, and for a large number of them, to attend to activism in issues that matter.

The largest form of reciprocity, however, is generalized reciprocity, whereby the soliciting theatre makers themselves are considered merely as intermediaries of theatre projects, and are not expected to return the generosity of their donors (Sahlin, 2017). Here, the social cohesion between backers and theatre makers is manifested in the importance placed on the end beneficiaries who are the audience members, and not the theatre makers themselves, as the latter are seen as the executors of the projects. Knowing that their donations, even if small, will be imparted to a substantially larger number of people, particularly the target audience who would otherwise not benefit from theatre productions, assured backers that their donations can have a positive cumulative effect:

“The particular project was very politically relevant at that time and had a lot of local support from the theatre and political community [...] [I would give to] socially aware, socially conscious art by small, independent companies and actors working for free...for me, the story is what is vital”

- D, *migrated playwright*

With a greater understanding of the ongoing scenario, backers in the industry identify with the situation faced by creatives and see it as a duty for all to support:

“Unfortunately, our industry is modelled around competition, but I strongly believe that we should provide a culture of celebrating

other people's passion and successes...actually being conscientious [...] it's all about creating a culture of support".

- *PP, director and producer*

This close identification with reciprocal altruism underlies that giving to theatre projects would benefit the society eventually, reiterates the value of theatre as public good (Scharf and Smith, 2016).

Overall, the chains of reciprocities grow more specific with the proximity of social relations between backers and the soliciting theatre makers. To illustrate, intergenerational reciprocity with a future bias, a conception of direct but delayed reciprocity, or known more specifically as anterior generalized reciprocity in which individuals pay for the next generation is also strong in the crowdfunding of theatre projects among the three categories of theatre makers (Becker, 1990). This is evident with graduate theatre companies where older family members, relatives, and mentors tend to place their hopes on the ambition of younger generation theatre makers. Individual artists and established theatre makers are similarly reciprocated this way because of the instrumental role of their project, which aims to engage with, and cater for artistically excluded young audiences. The importance placed on the younger generation to be given the opportunity to experience an enriching cultural life has motivated older backers to give to theatre projects, and to give more generously on the whole:

"[The company] has made me smile since I was a child and they have made a huge impact on me growing up. I can't wait for more children to have such a positive influence in their lives. Good luck with the project!"

- *TS, crowdfunding campaign page, 8/12/2017*

"[The project] was a fantastic experience for the children from [...] Primary School to be involved in. Looking forward to seeing many more smiles."

- *ET, crowdfunding campaign page, 9/12/2017*

The research data reveals that reverse reciprocity also operates in all three categories of theatre makers whereby the sentiment to help those who are helpful to other people, even if the backers are not themselves the beneficiaries of this generosity, encouraged backers to make a reciprocal gift to the theatre makers through donations (Kolm, 2009:37). Established theatre companies, thanks to their productive years in the industry, have more easily attracted this reverse reciprocity whereby backers donate out of a feeling of gratitude for the theatre company's role in the cultural flourishing of their community as well as their locality, the training that some of them have received, their artistic achievements and accolades:

"It [the theatre company] did my granddaughter so much good [...] she is now at university studying stage design...I just thought that since she has been heavily involved in their performances, they deserve the support for what they do...they have provided so much for the young people, which, unfortunately, suffered because of all the cutbacks"

- JH, *grandmother of a theatre participant*

In the same way, individual artists constitute another category of theatre makers whose role in the community is highly valued, and therefore, backing their theatre projects tends to be an expression of moral indebtedness and appreciation (Kolm, 2009:38).

"Such a worthy cause and amazing company. Thanks for everything you have done for Elliot x"

- BP, crowdfunding campaign page, 8/12/2017

Hence, the presence of reciprocal relations becomes part and parcel of a communitarian effort where such involvement has transpired as an inflection of civic participation that is nurtured by social cohesion (Schuller, 2000). By corresponding to crowdfunding appeals of theatre projects, the social sphere encompassing the participatory role of the communitarian unit is enmeshed with its

consideration for a levelling of cultural values, which includes opportunities for equitable theatre making and theatrical offering.

As drivers of reciprocity, empathy also works at two layers, which are identified with the mediator, and the beneficiary. As an organized resource initiative, arising out of an immediate financial crisis, donations to theatre makers are meant to emancipate them from their current situation of need. However, due to theatre's artistic and social basis, theatre makers are often not the direct beneficiaries of the fund but as individuals transforming the economic capital into an experiential creation for their audience, exemplifying Mauss' 'cycle of gifting' and Putnam's 'virtuous cycles' in which the giving process does not end with the receiver (Mauss, 2006; Schuller et. al., 2000). It is clear from the campaigns and interviews that the end recipients are not directly the theatre makers soliciting the funds but instead those who get to experience their production in the end, and hence, in this double-layer empathy, donations to theatre projects require no further justification. The necessity to create and produce theatre, as a contribution to the field (the orientation adopted by most graduate theatre companies), or in response to community needs (the orientation adopted by most individual artists), while lacking the financial resources to do so sparks empathy among individuals, prompting their contribution to the projects. The empathy that theatre makers have for their target audience begets the empathy of the public towards theatre makers themselves. This depicts a civic trinity whereby mediating the engagement of others to advance the community prompts the active participation of good citizens (Lorentzen and Hustinx, 2007: 105).

In their joint effort to realize crowdfunding projects, whether through one-off donation or serial backing, the contribution from backers represents what Putnam

(2000) calls “the associational life required for democracy and societal integration”, an element without which, “reciprocity will have no takers”, whereby theatre projects alongside their artistic and societal aims would be harder to materialize. From this perspective, crowdfunding campaign pages become spaces where civil society mediates the involvement of the wider community, forming citizen action “capable of exerting their collective influence” by drawing a collective digital following to theatre companies and their productions, particularly when most of these projects are not yet able to comply with “the rules of ‘the game’ of ‘the big government’ ”, which in this case applies to ACE and the local government (Warleigh, 2001: 620). In doing so, civil society shifts the theatre scene by including work by new and late-entrants who have yet to qualify for public funding unto the larger theatre landscape.

In essence, the backing of theatre projects may have started as an empathic gesture but in its collective nature, donations by many individuals gives shape to a consensus-building democratic entity (as Putnam pronounces) where the contesting of ‘what gets out there’ takes place (Edwards, 2018:13; Gleaser and Feller, 2018; McDonnell, 2014). The empathy of backers in the dynamics of giving is a response to the needs justified by theatre makers, where the requisite exchange of information between soliciting theatre makers and their potential backers is made easily accessible through crowdfunding platforms, a process which has resulted in increased visibility on the plight of the struggling artists alongside cuts in arts funding. Accumulatively, the numbers of crowdfunding campaigns over the years have given backers insight into the financial reality of creative work for the majority whose creative pursuit would be cut short without external financial assistance. In response to this financial need, crowdfunders have assumed a role in a social change agenda to mobilize theatre makers, and by

doing so, have destabilized the status quo of projects theatre makers want to make, and which the public wants to see made.

The web of networks stemming from the social capital of theatre makers which comprise of fellow artists, advocates and aesthetes, demonstrate communities coming together on the crowdfunding platform as a collective action. Where attention is brought to bear on specific issues within this context, this form of civil society helps connect the gaps through an associational ecosystem (Edwards, 2018:13). Hence, what started as an assistance of small donations from social relations has indeed paved the way for new and late entrant theatre makers to seep through the crevices of the hegemony of a landscape dominated by the more experienced and established, often institutionally funded theatre companies. However, much like the philanthropic effort of the third/non-profit sector that offsets a percentage of government expenditure, such contribution by plural funders among members of the public embodies an invisible economy (Elder-Vass, 2016; Jung and Harrow, 2015; Andreoni, 1992), which despite its knock on effect on theatre production subsidy, often goes unnoticed, or is deemed merely an act of charity²³⁷.

By being open about the artistic struggles under austerity measures, crowdfunding campaigns simultaneously close what Erving Goffman calls 'the psychic gap' between theatre makers and the public through a greater understanding of the systemic sequence of occurrences that makes up the performative process involving training, rehearsals, performance, and its aftermath (Schechner in Deth and Maloney, 2012:63). This invitation into the back region and out of the public view, where "the performance is prepared, props are readied, artists relax or warm

²³⁷ As gathered from *crowdfunder.co.uk*, 11405 backers have collectively contributed £507,859 for theatre projects alone between September 2011 and April 2018.

up, and technical needs” usually concealed from the audience is now being shared in crowdfunding campaigns. Opening the “various theatrical contrivances” to the public has gradually shed the mystification privileged only to the artists, thus, eliminating the previous dichotomy that separates the domains of the artists from what is accessible to the public (Goffman in Deth and Maloney, 2012:64)^{238, 239,240}. Having reached this information symmetry, backers have the opportunity to be more involved should they choose to do so²⁴¹, or like the rest of backers, simply cherish the feeling that their contributions are enabling talents to take small steps in reaching their potential. This enabling culture in a loosely collective partnership such as in crowdfunding has shown to be rooted in helping those who want to help themselves and making an additional contribution to the community, aspects which backers identify as “noble and endearing” and therefore find hard to ignore, which brings us to the position of theatre (the arts) as a public good, and its motivation for cultural giving (Deth and Maloney, 2012).

In part, the reason crowdfunding for theatre projects has worked the way it has is due to the view of art as a public good that should be shared and experienced by all, along with social benefits that are usually attached to it. (see **TABLE 10**) Art’s very nature that is characteristically social means that culture is intrinsically connected to a social base (Throsby, 1986, 1983; Becker, 1974:767), which makes it easier for backers to identify with the cultural products they support. Coupled with this, as mentioned, is a residual faith in the welfare state, which responded

²³⁸ as exemplified through *Tabatha*’s requests for donations to pay for a seamstress to make an oversized rainbow blanket as part of her prop, later for part payment for a second-hand van to replace her broken van which she has used to transport her props and set, and similarly, when *Belle* explained that part of the donation raised would pay for a specially designed mobile stage

²³⁹ the many requests of theatre companies like *LD*, *MA*, and *MK* to supplement the cost of hiring rehearsal spaces and venues reveals how expensive theatrical preparation can be even for established theatre makers

²⁴⁰ the number of graduate theatre companies crowdfunding to help out with the cost of performing at fringe festivals points to the high cost needed to participate, which involves fees, accommodation, and expenses for the length of duration there

²⁴¹ as evident in the emergence of serial backers and micro-philanthropists for niche and needs-based theatre projects

with backers' sense of duty to step in and 'reinstate' the former 'glory' even if it means exercising the liberality of small giving (Dacombe et. al., 2018; Deth and Maloney, 2012; Kolm, 2009).

By assisting individuals to follow their artistic calling²⁴², the crowdfunding of theatre projects sits closely with the principles of democracy that inseparably links together cultural giving with cultural politics and cultural economics (DuBois, 2013). In supplementing the welfare of theatre makers, their target audience, and the larger society, backers help materialize a mutually beneficial exchange between artists, audiences and the community. Collectively, online backing across theatre projects has allowed theatre makers who are marginalized by structural barriers to public funding to be given a voice through their project, and in doing so, consequently plays a role in the counter-current of projects deemed risky for cultural investment. These projects are instead given a chance to materialize, hence, fostering a condition for artistic articulation regardless of theatre makers' experience in the industry, financial standing, or absence of public engagement in the project, which conditions many new entrants have yet to attain. The financial support which helps supplement production or development costs of theatre projects nurtures theatre makers and their effort rather than dismissing them with a decisive non-qualification or rejection of funding. Thus, as a mediating tool, crowdfunding is balancing a systemic bias, which has favoured the more experienced, and the more financially adequate. Eventually, in their aggregated measure, backers' decisions to donate has re-aligned the theatre landscape through the confluence of different demography of theatre makers whose need for financial support has compelled them to crowdfund.

²⁴² and by supporting a product which is seen to serve as a public good

TABLE 10 : Comments from backers on *crowdfunder.co.uk* campaign pages expressing their support for the greater benefit of theatre projects

	COMPANY	BACKERS' COMMENTS
Graduate Theatre Companies	<i>BLOOM!</i>	<p>DV 16th March 2018 Great work, lads. Do my nation proud!</p> <p>MI 24th March 2018 Sounds a brilliant idea! Go for it!! it's not much but I hope this little bit helps</p> <p>JQ 13th April 2018 We must support and protect the arts and culture; where the drama and joy of humanity collide in simplicity and complexity. Go well and love from Oz</p>
	<i>DUPLICATE</i>	<p>ML 21st February 2018 Good luck! Hope you raise enough to continue your dreams</p> <p>JB 23rd March 2019 Supporting you in all your ventures!</p> <p>AM 8th March 2019 We support you all the way!! Wishing you all the success and best reviews for Fringe Take 2 xx</p>
	<i>INTREPID</i>	<p>CD 11th April 2018 As the mother of 3 daughters, how could I resist supporting this. Go get them girls!</p> <p>EJ 10th April 2018 Just because you guys are going to change the world.</p> <p>MV 8th March 2018 I advocate equal gender parity for female creatives in the theatre industry, but especially musical theatre which is an art form in itself; the writers are there...LET'S CHAMPION THEM ALL. Good luck with this - be bold and be brave. All my love, x x x</p>
Individual Artists	<i>BELLE</i>	<p>TT 25th October 2015 Love your idea and really hope you get the rest of the money. We need more women telling the stories :) xxx</p> <p>PC 30th September 2015 This will be great. Looking forward to seeing you out and about!</p> <p>FW 26th October 2015 All the best to a natural born storyteller and my oldest friend.</p>
	<i>JULES</i>	<p>VG 1st October 2018 No children in my life but we all benefit from increased wellbeing in our future generation!</p> <p>NG 1st October 2018 Pledged because they consistently produce such great shows for All children. To quote Disneys Lilo and Stitch 'Nobody gets left behind or forgotten'</p> <p>KN 6th September 2018 Such an important topic for children!</p>
	<i>TABATHA</i>	<p>BG 18th April 2019 Supporting a compassionate, powerful, creative woman in sharing her work with others is the least I can do... Your skills astound me. Best of luck and all the love xxx</p> <p>IM 20th March 2019</p>

		<p>I'm supporting the [...] team because I appreciate the talent, energy and commitment that's going into making the show and bringing it to audiences.</p> <p>BBD Company_18th April 2019 [...] is a hugely important project for older children to explore body positivity, embrace otherness and celebrate diversity. It needs to be made. x</p>
Established Theatre Companies	GC	<p>TO_27th October 2015 Wish we could be there to see it - I know it will be a hilarious hit! Much love xx</p> <p>TG_12th November 2015 Fabulous you inspiring Woman xx</p> <p>RW_17th December 2015 Good Luck with your project. I'm sorry this isn't more [the donations] and I'm sorry it took me so long to do it! XX</p>
	SA	<p>KB_24th March 2017 A worthwhile project giving children an exciting and inspiring way to use the library - and read</p> <p>AW_25th March 2017 As KB says this really does inspire young people to read and use libraries.</p> <p>PY_30th March 2017 Sounds as if it will inspire young readers so wishing you lots of luck with your funding!</p>
	SH	<p>WG_12th December 2017 We always Love the work of SH. They make such a difference to so many children's lives. Keep up the good work! Xx</p> <p>LC_6th December 2017 Love the work that this company so passionately delivers to our young people. Wishing you all the best! Xx</p> <p>AN_24th November 2017 You guys are all doing a terrific job! It's wonderful to see your amazing results - so inspiring. x x</p>

With the general agreement of art as a common good being evident among backers as cultural experiences that should be shared by all, the way that giving is organized on crowdfunding platforms around relationships and the purpose of giving have created an environment conducive for the meeting of social values with cultural values. Cultural values, as seen in the shared opinion on the value of art for its aesthetics and public appeal to convey meaning, when mobilized by the network of relationships indicates a realization of values in spheres other than the domain of the market. This realization of values expressed in the personal sphere

of the family²⁴³, and the social sphere²⁴⁴, therefore, brings together the capacity for the informal sphere of the larger civic society to connect the social values of relationships with the cultural values of the arts (Frey, 2002; Klammer 2002, 2003, 2004; Throsby, 2001), making way for shared patronage that exhibits a re-organization between artistic autonomy and the needs of the audience

9.4 Civic Participation Through Plurality in Cultural Giving

As mentioned, the backing of theatre projects may start as an individualized participation which then collectively becomes a social phenomenon in mobilizing cultural giving (Schuller et. al., 2000; Putnam, 1996), The sharing of monetary resources by a group of backers in their conscious decision to support efforts of soliciting theatre makers to provide public good demonstrates an engagement beyond the typically political and a variation of neo-Tocquevillean voluntary participation, which espouses Putnam's ingredients for a vibrant democracy (Deth and Maloney, 2012:115; Schuller et al., 2000). As demonstrated in the research, some of these notable consequences include support for marginal artistic voices and grassroots driven theatrical consumption which would have otherwise remained largely sidelined, if not mobilized as a civil society. Here, representative democracy, takes on a wider implication in the active and meaningful involvement of citizens beyond the electoral duty, onto a wider repertoire of decision-making in various activities including voting, active membership, and campaign participation (Deth and Maloney, 2012:231). The collective engagement in public affairs, based on "responsibility, solidarity, equal opportunities and individual rights" as shown in the support of theatre projects recognizes these as requirements that can facilitate transformation among communities, which identifies them as a democratic polity (Deth and Maloney, 2012:116; Schuller et. al., 2000). By overlooking the traditional

²⁴³ dominated by a sense of care and mutual responsibility

²⁴⁴ denoted by "a sense of community, identity, solidarity, neighbourliness, belonging, security, conviviality, friendship" (Lavoie, 2016: 6)

inequality in philanthropic and cultural participation through the removal of participatory barriers, this polity is made more visible through a heterogeneous mix of grassroots and institutional social agents.

From a conventional participatory perspective, the enhanced organization of crowdfunding platform by internet technologies manages the individualistic mode of participation through the lowering of participation cost and the easing of resource mobilization through electronic transactions, (tasks which have not been as convenient previously), which has allowed for a wider and immediate consciousness-raising that is able to bring together those who share the same interests and aims for culture, and their benefits to the public. The individual separate acts, which accumulatively contribute to the collective, encapsulates the crowdfunding of theatre projects as a new form of participation in the contemporary democratic politics, an observation gathered as the changing faces of democratic participation in many advanced democracies (Kedir, 2020; Deth and Maloney, 2012; Becker and Murphy, 2001).

As a relatively new individualized mode of participation, the permeation of the non-political into the political through an “expression of opinions” where individuals respond on the basis of justice and fairness as exemplified in crowdfunding, exhibits a revival of communitarian approaches which shows the capacity for re-shaping the landscape of cultural makers and cultural production (Dacombe et. al., 2018:1; Deth and Maloney, 2012:124; Micheletti and Stolle, 2004; Schuller et. al., 2000). As seen in the flow of participation of online backing to contribute financially to theatre makers, where the latter function as both the initiators and intermediaries of public good projects, the division of labour between them may be crudely seen as outsourcing cultural activism (Fischer and Mattson, 2009). As they

focus on their separate but interdependent goals, their crowdfunding connection risks gradually becoming a relationship of supplier-executor whereby backers supply the funds while theatre makers execute the deeds, rather than individuals' direct engagement with the target project beneficiaries themselves (Deth and Maloney, 2012:116).

Another criticism of this new mode of participation is its contrast with active citizenry, where members' voluntary participation is regular, with a passive group of supporters and donors whose participation is more ephemeral and episodic, as exemplified by backers' donations. The growing appeal of such individualized forms of participation may have resolved substantial instances of financial shortage through online connectivity but in doing so also encourages the public to subscribe to the comfort and peril of "chequebook participation" as conventional activism diminishes (Deth and Maloney, 2010; Whiteley, 2010). Here, the concern with such participation lies in the expectation that issues are considered resolved once individuals have donated to the cause, and perceived as once-for-all remedy, when on-going support is needed instead.

With the plurality of 'voices' in the micro-donations to theatre projects originating from a more horizontal network structure across the layers of social capital, the theatre landscape is witnessing an organic rise in the variety of producers, productions, and supporters. While the breadth of online backing may be narrow in some campaigns²⁴⁵ and more extensive in others²⁴⁶, the overall spread of donations from multiple backers across different levels of social proximity clearly adds to the plurality of support, which means involving the decision of many, and from more diverse range of individuals rather than the exclusive vertical support

²⁴⁵ concentrating on fewer layers of social capital

²⁴⁶ dispersed across more layers of social capital

from a singular funder. The ‘adjudication’ by the wider public project funding, has added a plural mix to decision making rather than being left entirely in the hands of the traditional gatekeepers, in particular, the ACE, perceived as the arbiter of artistic legitimacy, and the local government as the allocator of public monies at the municipal level²⁴⁷ (Smith et. al., 2016; Rosenberg, 1989). While this element has given crowdfunding its egalitarian status through which the breadth of voices across the grassroots to the top are given more equitable representation, and how jointly, their decisions are more representative of the wider spectrum of social agents, therein lies the indisputable weakness of crowdfunding. Despite the plurality of voices that crowdfunding can represent and the artistic freedom it can nourish, which consequently provides opportunities for the public to consume a diverse range of productions, there is however, a limit to the frequency and amount of financial support that the crowd can afford to give. Resorting to social capital and relying on this over time could easily risk personal, even professional relationships unless the reciprocity is pronounced and clearly places both parties²⁴⁸ in a win-win situation that frees the soliciting theatre makers from indebtedness, and similarly, backers from the obligation to repeatedly give altruistically. This explains why in the cases examined, repeat crowdfunding campaigns are mostly afforded by theatre companies with a clear exchange of services or products to offer their potential backers (such as personalized jingles, free tickets, extended play record (EP), acknowledgement in programme)²⁴⁹, unless their expertise, and/or reputation precedes the ask²⁵⁰.

²⁴⁷ Johnson et. al. (2006) outline the implicit and explicit ways through which a social object builds its legitimacy from the individual to the collective as occurring in four stages : innovation, local validation, diffusion, and general validation.

²⁴⁸ the party making the ask and the party making the donation

²⁴⁹ in the case of *INTREPID*, *TALEBEARERS*.

²⁵⁰ in the case of *DUPLICATE*, *Jules*, *Tabatha* and *SH*.

Moreover, since the plurality of individual funders cannot match the symbolic capital of singular funding from cultural authorities, the possibility of gathering multiple funding sources from backers at the micro level cannot seem to replace the endorsement that theatre makers get from being awarded ACE grants. Doubling as an acceptance to the larger theatre ecosystem and almost a common currency²⁵¹ to an overarching membership of artists, there is a hierarchical artistic merit and value in being granted funds by a cultural authority (Holden, 2006; Cameron, 2005), which financial capital often overrides the symbolic capital it represents. Nevertheless, the spillover effect can work both ways since the singularity of institutional funding attracts the plurality of private funding²⁵² due to the trust that one party has established over another, and vice versa²⁵³ as seen in some projects with initial support from institutions, and clearly in the cases of match crowdfunding²⁵⁴.

9.5 Representation and Illusion of Cultural Democracy in the Crowdfunding of Theatre Projects

Observably, the solicitation of small donations is only as democratic as the distribution of horizontal and vertical network structures across theatre makers' layers of social capital. As seen in **TABLE 11**, there is a huge funding disparity between the lowest and highest amount of donation, suggesting a vast gap in the capacity to give among theatre makers' social contacts.

²⁵¹ which I would again argue is symbolic capital

²⁵² as seen in the cases of *BLOOM!*, *DUPLICATE*, *JG*, *LD*, and *SH*

²⁵³ as seen in the case of *Jules* and *Tabatha*, as well as *DUPLICATE* and *TALEBEARERS*

²⁵⁴ as seen in the cases of *Belle*, *Tabatha*, and *MA*

TABLE 11: Range of donation amount and number of backers from the cases of crowdfunded theatre projects examined.

	Graduate Theatre Companies	Individual Artists	Established Theatre Companies
Lowest amount of donation	£5	£1	£1
Highest donation of donation	£1000	£1000	£1000
Lowest number of backers	9	12	4
Highest number of backers	68	55	124

In examining the representation in the support for the productions of the three categories of theatre companies, the lowest and highest numbers of their backers captures an exercise of cultural democracy. With only 4 backers, a production can hardly be considered to represent public support, whereas obtaining donations from 124 backers would strongly indicate a higher representation of plural support, seeing that the highest number of backers for graduate theatre companies and individual artists is 68 and 55 respectively, support for established theatre companies which exceeds both by almost double illustrates the latter's capacity to appeal to donors from a wide range of giving capacity (£1 to £1000). This confirms that aside from the size of social capital, the number of social relations with a high disposable income and a high propensity to give (or at least, possessing access to vertical networks) would substantially favour some theatre makers over others, for the optimal advantage in resource mobilization.

In part, an apparent mechanism to address the concerns with cultural representation and cultural democracy can be seen in the division of funding percentage between institutional funders and the crowd in match crowdfunding. In its imposition or promotion of plural funding, donating to a project denotes a say in the invitation to share the cost of realizing a project that would have otherwise

been decided by a singular funder (like the ACE) or none at all. By partially funding a project, an institutional funder or the crowd is signalling where the decision resides while prompting for the rest of the funding proportion to be matched by other parties if they too deem the project deserving. Fundamentally, although on one hand, match crowdfunding denotes a sharing in funding decisions, its practice is first and foremost an exercise to re-distribute institutional funding more thinly across more projects, with the expectation for others to contribute or projects lose their conditional support. Thus, despite being a possible solution to integrate grassroots support with institutional support, match crowdfunding as a system presents those with greater access to resources a higher chance of ensuring that the institutional portion of funding is secured.

Furthermore, as such schemes also tend to offer a match within a limited duration, funds from the crowd would similarly need to be raised relatively quick, which could only be acquired with the presence of vertical network structures and optimal density of ties among theatre makers' social relations to provide the funds, if not themselves, then through their connections to someone with a willingness and propensity to donate generously, as earlier mentioned. To this, Dacombe's (2018:9) questioning of whether real democracy has taken place when in fact 'the status divide of how a system works' can be used to the advantage of socially and financially superior groups in the name of participation²⁵⁵. Hence, the tendency for the elites to dominate a democratic process, through their capacity to exercise it more than the majority, hands them the monopoly over the institutional funding pool that can inevitably be traced back to the stock of social capital of theatre makers themselves as convertible resources, but with potentially harsh

²⁵⁵ "...distinctions in knowledge and status amongst those taking part in the democratic process militate against broad-based participation. Put simply, those who are lucky enough to be part of the 'elites', which, in Schumpeterian thought, dominate the democratic process, are more likely to have developed the capacity and expertise to fully engage with democratic life than the majority of people..."

repercussions when democratic participation becomes a deal-breaker. Instead of the participation which crowdfunding aspires by engaging backers directly in the funding–cum-decision-making process that is open, responsive, transparent, accountable, and suited to the needs²⁵⁶ of theatre makers and their target audience, its mechanism could also be easily skewed to favour projects with larger donations from fewer individuals, as opposed to a democratic ideal of small donations from a large number of people. Here, crowdfunding presents us with an illusion of democracy, when, in reality, ‘the crowd’ who funded a project consisted of only 4 backers donating up to £250 each²⁵⁷ in comparison to a project funded by 62 backers donating to almost the same total amount (see **TABLE 12**).

TABLE 12: The stark contrast between the online backing of two theatre projects according to their categories.

Category	Respondent	Amount raised	Number of backers	Range of donations per backer	Shared attributes
Graduate Theatre Companies	<i>WOWZER</i>	£367	16	£5 – 50	Both received university funding
	<i>INTREPID</i>	£2881	16	£10 - 201	
Individual Artists	<i>Ollie</i>	£685	19	£5 – 100	Both received ACE funding
	<i>Jada</i>	£3380	120	£10 -300	
Established Theatre Companies	<i>LH</i>	£1551	4	£5 – 250	Both obtained funding from universities, charities, and organizations
	<i>SH</i>	£1680	62	£5 - 100	

As illustrated, a relatively small group of individuals whose collectivity does not speak of a meaningful population cannot be deemed as representational in the exercise of cultural democracy. If campaigns were measured by the amount of funding they raised instead of the number of backers who participated, then overcoming financial limitations can result in a disillusionment of representation,

²⁵⁶ Fung, 2004 cited in Dacombe (2018:10)

²⁵⁷ in the case of *LH*, among others

whereby skewed crowdfunding campaigns are the consequences of the failure to deliver an authentic diversity. Nevertheless, in the three categories of theatre makers interviewed, crowdfunding has added a social dimension to their hybrid funding by persuading them to reflect on the reality of their grassroots supporters²⁵⁸, and how they may want to organize this around their long term mixed funding effort. As evident in the number of theatre projects crowdfunded over the years²⁵⁹, the making of micro philanthropists and micro patrons are additional proof that philanthropic (through magnificent giving) and charitable giving (through liberal giving) are newer forms of cultural patronage countering the threat of the current arts funding climate through a cooperative effort by defending theatre makers' right to make theatre, and for the diversity of their productions to cater for the larger public (Dacombe, 2018:3).

9.6 Visibility of 'Typical' Cohorts of Theatre Makers and Theatre Productions

The greater visibility that crowdfunding lends to the concerns of theatre productions has essentially made visible two particular cohorts of theatre makers in the wider theatre landscape. Without the imposition of institutional funding criteria, theatre makers with minimal years of practice have emerged mostly among university spin-off graduate theatre companies, and individual theatre makers on their solo mission. The focus on these categories of theatre makers has been extensively documented in *Chapters 6 and 7*, detailing their respective experience with crowdfunding. In the data sets, the opposing traits of new graduate theatre companies and individual artists make the most compelling comparison of extremes. Because of the contrasting logic they adhere to, they exhibit diverging ends within the spectrum of cultural entrepreneurship, which

²⁵⁸ knowing who actually gave to the project

²⁵⁹ the list of backers to *KJ*'s first theatre project exemplifies the growing number of micro-philanthropists and micro-patrons giving to multiple projects on the platform

inform their attitudes towards funders in relation to their artistic orientation and practice (see **TABLE 13**).

TABLE 13: Two polarities in the gravitation of logics of practice (built on from Fandrich and Keenan, 2009)

Aspect of Logics of Practice	The Economics Logics of Practice	The Artistic Logics of Practice
<i>Structuration</i>	Bottom-up (upward process hierarchy; grassroots)	Top-down (downward process hierarchy; authoritarian)
<i>Role of artists</i>	Needs driven: Role as artists to respond to societal needs /human-centred	Artistic control: Role of artists to engineer direction
<i>Cultural production</i>	Instrumental	Intrinsic
<i>Cultural/Aesthetic standing</i>	Artists navigate in co-creation; Artists as facilitators	Approval from artistic community; Artistic leadership
<i>Validation</i>	Public validation Working with wisdom of the crowd	Artistic validation Working to prioritize artistic excellence
<i>Collaboration</i>	Cultural democracy Pluralistic Community as partners Social artistry	Artistic autonomy Monistic Fellow artists as partners Quality control
<i>Reputation</i>	As enabler/mobilizer to build symbolic capital	As legacy to strengthen symbolic capital
<i>Operation</i>	Civil society/ Sustainability model	Charitable/Not-for-profit model
<i>Values</i>	Organic relationship Egalitarianism Pragmatism	Policy-driven Public accountability Transparency
<i>Strongest layer of Social Capital</i>	Communitarian	Institutional
<i>Crowdfunding as...</i>	Branding praxis	Experimental means
<i>Evidence</i>	Seen strongest among sole traders	Seen strongest among established theatre companies

Between the two cohorts, graduate theatre makers largely demonstrate their adherence to the artistic logics of practice. With an artist-centred model, their orientation towards artistic freedom and adoption of the artist's role as the expert defines their highly intrinsic productions. The concentration on the production of art for art's sake in this artistic endeavour, however, entails a focus on subject matter that often leaves minimal room for public engagement. With cultural value that is highly placed in the pursuit of aesthetics, the tendency is to view artistic merit as the supreme measure for institutional validation.

Individual artists, on the other hand, tend to steer in the direction of economic logics of practice, with an audience-centred model that orientates towards meeting the needs of communities. By adopting a more open role of the artists as facilitators through the navigation of co-creation in various collaborations, they largely aim for instrumental productions with importance placed on bottom-up support, which therefore thrives on public validation. The cultural value of their productions is indicated by the response and participation from the audience, local community, organizations, and specialized artistic practice networks. Hence, it is through their extensive public engagement that they gradually obtain artistic legitimacy from institutional funders.

By comparison, as experienced practitioners in the industry often operating productions of a larger scale, established theatre companies customarily display the ability to strike a balance between the two logics of practice. By successfully blending both aspects, they become likely candidates for institutional funding that 'ticks all the boxes' than previous categories of theatre makers. Being more versed in how external funding sources work, further informs them of the appeal to both logics. Thus, the mature artistic identity and strong community presence of

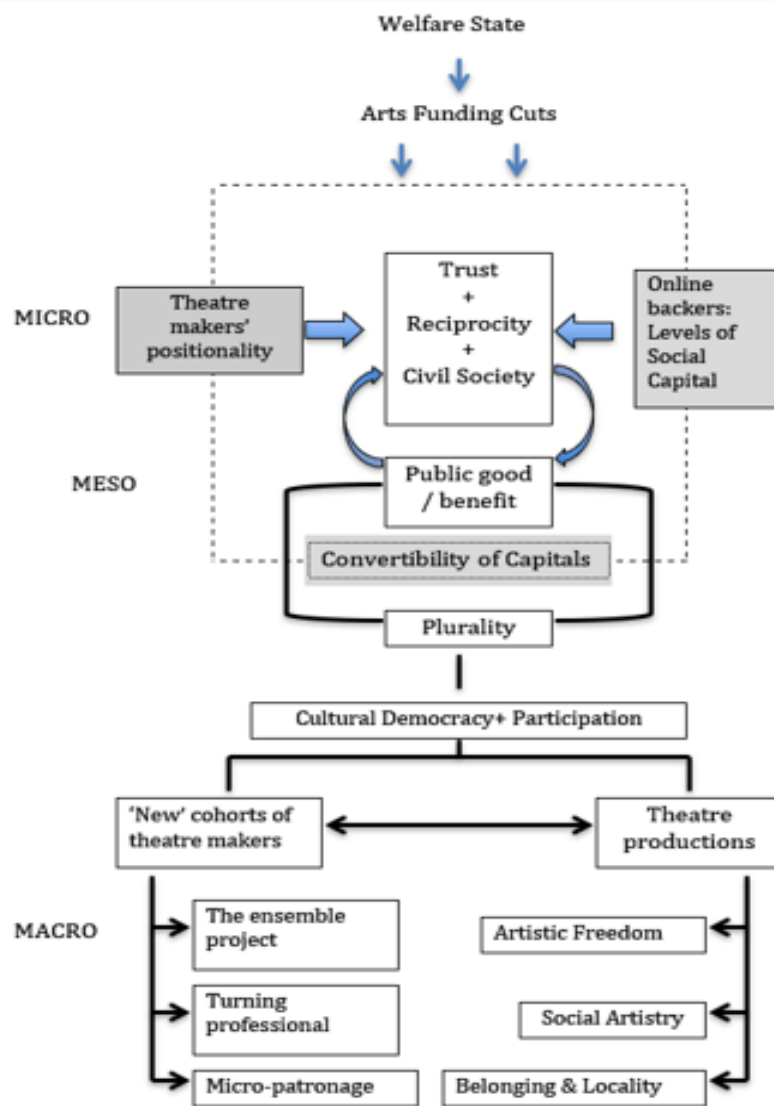
established theatre makers grant them the capacity to exercise artistic autonomy, assume a cultural leadership role, and balancing the aesthetics aspect of theatre making whilst keeping in line with productions which are typically crafted along the lines of intrinsic and extrinsic arts, respectively, between productions made purely for aesthetics, and those made to achieve a primarily or partially non-artistic aims. Any artistic orientation, approach, methodology and training, which defines the artistic profile and identity of theatre makers are typically affirmed in companies' campaign pages and websites, which proclaims the logics of practice they identify. Thus, backers generally donate with full awareness of the type of projects they support across the aesthetics-instrumental spectrum, whose decision inevitably provide a more variegated cultural palate, signifying a greater breadth of cultural value among the UK public other than those institutionally validated. This indication of the omnivorousness of cultural taste should perhaps raise the sensitivity of funding institutions and policy makers regarding the kind of assistance that needs to be made available to include a wider entry into the industry. Understandably, because funding from institutions comes from public money, and at times from private trusts and foundations, grants are only awarded to theatre makers with a proven track record, and while this is justified, the use of crowdfunding, as mentioned, has afforded industry newcomers room for exploration and experimentation. Hence, the systemic outcome of institutional funding criteria despite its best intentions to award grants accordingly to those the awarding committee feels deserving may have created a cultural divide between artists whose works have received institutional approval with those who have not, which potentially fuels a disharmonious psychology of 'Us and Them'²⁶⁰. Thus, the system has inadvertently fuelled hegemony, and created overt hierarchy among theatre producers and their brand of artistic productions that together can be

²⁶⁰ the apprehension about stratification in their dealing for funding appeals to ACE have been reported among individuals artists in this research

hostile to newcomers (Thoburn, 2007; Levine and Levine, 1990). Resorting to crowdfunding somehow presents room for counter-narrative.

Overall, this chapter has drawn the themes from the research findings in outlining the repercussions of crowdfunding from the level of individual theatrical practice to the larger theatre landscape, and how its role in the theatre funding ecology has increasingly shifted to plural patronage through cultural giving, thus, pointing to the increased participation of producers and their cohorts of productions, which has garnered public validation rather than institutional validation alone. While crowdfunding unveils the grassroots philanthropy in response to a funding gap in the sector, it is simultaneously an enabler that is flawed, capable of supplementing the financial needs of theatre companies though with the vulnerability of upsetting the democratic representation in plural funding and shared patronage. For a summary of the discussion chapter, see **DIAGRAM 14**. I now proceed with the conclusion of this research.

DIAGRAM 14: Summary of discussion



Chapter 10

CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the exploration into theatre makers' experience of raising funds through crowdfunding using the platform *crowdfunder.co.uk* following the decentralization of arts funding as part of post-2010 austerity measures, concurrently exerted by the launching of 2010 as the year of cultural philanthropy and 2011 as the year of corporate and individual giving. It summarizes the response to the overarching research questions: *What effect does crowdfunding have on the theatre-funding ecosystem? What repercussions does it have on the wider theatre landscape?* The section then states the research's contribution to knowledge, outlines its limitations and suggestions for future work. Finally, it draws a close to the thesis with a reflection on the research journey, and personal insights of the researcher.

10.1 Summary

The exploration into theatre makers' experience with crowdfunding shows that donations to theatre projects are largely motivated by the relationship between backers and theatre makers, as marked by their levels of social capital²⁶¹ whose donations speak of the economic transferability from social capital to affective economy²⁶², cultural awards²⁶³, reputation²⁶⁴, and public good²⁶⁵.

The findings demonstrate that these different motivations of cultural giving to theatre results in a more diverse offering of theatre productions from a wider participation of theatre makers that include those facing structural barriers to public

²⁶¹ seen in family, friends, community, and institutional networks

²⁶² among families and friends

²⁶³ among communities and institutions

²⁶⁴ particularly important at the institutional level of social capital

²⁶⁵ important to all levels of social capital but especially at community and institutional levels of social capital

funding as newcomers and late-entrants to the industry. While crowdfunding is one of the few alternatives of raising funds from social relations, graduate theatre companies have benefitted from the artistic freedom of 'no strings attached' which has paved the way for intrinsically-driven productions²⁶⁶. Meanwhile, because their social relations tend to spread across grassroots and institutions, the theatre productions of individual artists have adopted a more socially and extrinsically driven approach which has given rise to productions of a collaborative nature. In the case of established theatre companies, despite their less than keen attitude towards the use of crowdfunding platforms, backing for their projects has come from a combination of their inherent horizontal and vertical network structures of communities and institutions. The ability to draw donations by the generalization of the three cultural-entrepreneurial positionalities, which demonstrate varying exercise of bonding, bridging and linking social capital can be traced back to their possession of reputation, a form of symbolic capital, or lack thereof.

The research points to the ultimate aim of theatre companies to eventually be funded with public money²⁶⁷ and private institutional funding²⁶⁸ despite forming only a portion of their total mixed funding sources due to the symbolic capital that receiving their funding from these funders represents. The value of recognition, reputation and prestige transcends the economic value of institutional grants themselves, in particular if sustainability in the theatre industry is the purpose of their enterprise.

Underlying the crowdfunding of theatre projects by their networks of strong and weak ties is the facilitation of reciprocal exchanges which chains of initiation begins

²⁶⁶ art for art's sake or avant-garde

²⁶⁷ such as grants from ACE and local government

²⁶⁸ such as trusts and foundations

from the theatre makers to their backers, which then flow to their projects onto their audience, and the wider society. This inter-relatedness has originated as backers' reactionary gesture to the cutbacks in arts funding, with the intention to safeguard theatre as a public good along a spectrum of altruistic and self-interested giving. The backing of theatre projects can be read as indirect participation in culture whether as co-funders, co-producers, co-sponsors, promoters, or even audience members, which process has resulted in the making and consumption of a larger variety of theatre productions, by a larger pool of theatre makers.

10.2 Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis sheds light on a less considered territory of crowdfunded theatre projects among smaller non-profit organizations in the UK. It draws insights from the personal experience of graduate, solo and established theatre makers with regards to their practice as temporarily being financially rescued by their backers amidst respective concerns in starting out, survival and sustainability of their endeavours. It demonstrates that the levels of social capital among backers is part of a larger engine of reciprocal actors whose generosity to give to theatre projects plays a role in providing a more diversified body of work by adding productions which are not necessarily framed by institutions, but rather consented by the plurality of funding sources from the democratic spread of social relations, into the wider theatre ecology.

10.3 Personal Value of My Research

Researching this topic has presented me with the opportunity to listen attentively to stories from esteemed practitioners in the field as well as those who have recently started a career in theatre. The task has brought me to travel to fringe festivals, watched their performances and witnessed the interactions of audience members, and experienced the invigorating sense of space and environment where their

performances have taken place. This has been a fascinating journey for me personally and as a scholar, with the fringe festivals in general, but particularly with the children's fringe festival, which is an area I wish to explore, given the chance.

Additionally, I am intrigued by the precarious nature of theatre makers, and how they manage to juggle work that "pays the bill" with work that they have to "subsidize" first until the production cost could be offset later. In particular, the determination of a graduate theatre company whose members were holding six different jobs before they finally raised enough from earned income and crowdfunding to perform at theatre fringe festivals across the globe, was to me, a beautiful success story. Meanwhile, it was eye-opening to learn from the experience of another graduate theatre company whose members have been drained from the persistent need to produce and perform without the help of institutional funding, before their passion finally took a toll on their wellbeing, signalling the impending collapse of talented and hardworking young theatre makers who eventually crashed without institutional support. The subjective experiences of theatre makers have given me a point to further reflect on the manifestations of social capital, and how the missing ingredients between levels of social capital, especially, the missing linking/brokerage network ties prevent opportunities to access resources.

10.4 Limitations

This research has been limited by the inability to obtain and secure interviews from theatre makers whose crowdfunding campaigns significantly did not meet the funding target. The subject of crowdfunding, which has inadvertently invited a 'successful' versus 'failed' dichotomy would have provided a more nuanced subjectivity to the experience if not limited by the perception that only campaigns

deemed 'successful' are worth exploring. However, the refusal to participate in interviews is a decision I have to respect, despite the value that their insight can provide for this research, particularly, through the possibility of examining the infiltration of dark social capital and its inherent ramifications resulting in the lack of backing. This would have given an interesting point of comparison, especially with theatre makers who have managed to crowdfund actively within a brief duration of one to two years.

Another limitation of this research is the difficulty of securing interviews from backers as I have been numerous mistaken for a stranger asking for donations, despite their online identification being publicly displayed on the platform. Since the snowball technique assisted by interviewed backers had been too slow and hardly led to successive interviews, the difficult of reaching out to the interview subjects finally prompted me to randomly contact backers through *Facebook Messenger* and compensate the lack of data with the comment section of the crowdfunding campaign pages instead.

Setting dates and times for interviews has also been challenging as theatre makers went on tours for weeks and months, sometimes incessantly from one project to next. Added to this is their precarious nature of work that had made it difficult to arrange a suitable session. Nevertheless, those I have managed to interview have been generous with their time as far as their busy schedule has permitted them, and for that I am thankful for the data they have provided despite being a total stranger with no connection to anyone they know.

10.5 Implications for Future Research

An interesting follow up to this research would be an investigation into individual female theatre makers from the older age bracket of sixty and above who are still actively practising, and have either used or are planning to use crowdfunding again to finance their project. This is prompted by the challenges of one my interviewees in drawing donations from the older backers who are willing to donate rather generously but whose intention has been impeded by their lack of trust of online monetary transactions, and the unfamiliarity of making campaign pledges on crowdfunding platforms. Their preference to give donations directly, although a kind gesture, was seen by my interviewee as not as helpful considering offline giving would not be captured on the campaign page for others to see and encourage the flow of pledges as they are happening live during the campaign. By not using the platform to channel donations, their act of giving losses its visibility of social connectedness otherwise capable of signalling interest in the project to prospective backers across wider demographics.

Another area to explore would entail questioning the number of solo female theatre makers on crowdfunding platforms that far exceeds their male counterparts, and whether this might be a reflection of different levels of access to private and public funding, as with differing concentration of bonding, bridging, and linking network ties, or possibly the varying degrees of openness to navigate solicitations publicly through crowdfunding.

A further impetus from this research would be investigating into graduate theatre companies which have gone into hiatus without ongoing community and institutional support, and what it might take for them to return to the theatre scene. While carrying out the research I was also curious about obtaining insights from

the dynamics of cultural leadership within the organizational model of graduate theatre companies in keeping their ensemble together while granting each other the freedom to explore and pursue individual artistic careers. “What input from their individual pursuits are useful to the ensemble, and how are they optimizing these to the advantage of the company?”, I believe is one of the questions worth asking in understanding the nature of cultural work and the challenges of their young enterprise.

I believe there is also value in examining other groups who use crowdfunding to finance their theatre project such as community and youth theatres, amateurs, and dramatic societies, but time has limited me to focus on the three groups and set my discussion within those parameters. Data from these groups may well reveal other valuable insights into the subject of crowdfunded theatre projects.

10.6 Final Remarks

This thesis offers a collective experiential account for theatre companies wishing to launch their fundraising campaign, by raising key issues for theatre funding in the UK and its ecosystem of cultural funding. It highlights the relationship of theatre makers and their backers, whose donations to theatre projects have made way for the redistribution of financial support in response to the cutbacks and structural barriers to public funding, despite the country’s artistic surplus of theatre makers. Although with its inherent tendency for a skewed democracy, the crowdfunding of theatre projects has given shape to a more diverse range of theatre productions backed by families, friends, communities and institutions whose motivations to give may differ but which results in a richer theatre landscape.

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APPENDICES
A: List of interviewees

Graduate Theatre Companies	Sole Traders	Established Theatre Companies	Backers
<i>BESPOKE</i>	<i>Belle</i>	<i>GC</i>	<i>AD</i>
<i>BLOOM!*</i>	<i>Claire</i>	<i>JG*</i>	<i>CH</i>
<i>DAPPER</i>	<i>Chrissy*</i>	<i>KJ</i>	<i>DM</i>
<i>DUPLICATE</i>	<i>Ella</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>GG</i>
<i>INTREPID</i>	<i>Grady</i>	<i>LH</i>	<i>JH</i>
<i>LOOPED</i>	<i>Jemma</i>	<i>MA</i>	<i>JO</i>
<i>SPEAK!</i>	<i>Jules*</i>	<i>MT</i>	<i>MM</i>
<i>SPOOFED</i>	<i>Marisole</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>SO</i>
<i>TALEBEARERS</i>	<i>Ollie</i>	<i>SH</i>	<i>TC</i>
<i>WOWZER</i>	<i>Tabatha*</i>	<i>TA</i>	<i>TL</i>

*These theatre makers have also donated to other projects on the crowdfunding platform, and in total, they made up for the total of 15 backers interviewed.

B: Some of the props made for the theatre productions raised from crowdfunding



A portable wooden stage designed and attached to a bicycle paid with funds raised from the crowdfunding project by *Belle*, which production has been performed from 30/10/2015 onwards.



An oversized, colourful scarf that thematically holds *Tabatha's* puppetry performance together which is meant to float over and held by audience members was paid from the funds raised from her crowdfunding project which production first took off on 30/8/2017.